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GROWTH AND STRUCTURE
OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

BY

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CONTENTS.

PREFACE.

The scope and plan of this volume have been set forth in the introductory paragraph. I have endeavoured to write at once popularly and so as to be of some profit to the expert philologist. In some cases I have advanced new views without having space enough to give all my reasons for deviating from commonly accepted theories, but I hope to find an opportunity in future works of a more learned character to argue out the most debatable points.

I owe more than I can say to numerous predecessors in the fields of my investigations, most of all to the authors of the *New English Dictionary*. The dates given for the first and last appearance of a word are nearly always taken from that splendid monument of English scholarship, and it is hardly necessary to warn the reader not to take these dates too literally. When I say, for instance, that *fenester* was in use from 1290 to 1548, I do not mean to say that the word was actually heard for the first and for the last time in those two years, but only that no earlier or later quotations have been discovered by the painstaking authors of that dictionary.

I have departed from a common practice in retaining the spelling of all authors quoted. I see no reason why in so many English editions of Shakespeare the spelling is modernized while in quotations from other Elizabethan authors the old spelling is followed. Quotations from Shakespeare are here regularly given in the spelling of the First Folio (1623). The only point where, for the convenience of modern readers, I regulate the old usage, is with regard to capital letters and *u, v, i, j*, printing, for instance, *us* and *love* instead

of *vs* and *loue*. — To avoid misunderstandings, I must here expressly state that by Old English (OE.) I always understand the language before 1150, still often termed Anglo-Saxon.

As for the philosophy of speech underlying this book I may refer the reader to three recent books, "Language, its Nature, Development and Origin" (London, G. Allen & Unwin, 1922, German translation, "Die Sprache, ihre Natur, Entwickelung und Entstehung", Heidelberg, C. Winter, 1925), "The Philosophy of Grammar" (London, G. Allen & Unwin, 1924), and "Mankind, Nation and Individual" (Oslo, H. Aschehoug & Co., 1925). I have dealt with English grammar in the four volumes of "Modern English Grammar" (MEG., Heidelberg) and in the shorter "Essentials of English Grammar" (London).

The ninth edition has been carefully revised and brought up to date. The changes concern chiefly chapters VII (which has been made into two, VII and VIII) and VIII (which is now IX).

For some valuable suggestions I am much obliged to Professor R. Hittmair of Vienna.

Lundehave, Helsingør (Elsinore),
   July 1988.

                                                    O. J.

Chapter I.

Preliminary Sketch.

1. It will be my endeavour in this volume to characterize the chief peculiarities of the English language, and to explain the growth and significance of those features in its structure which have been of permanent importance. The older stages of the language, interesting as their study is, will be considered only in so far as they throw light either directly or by way of contrast on the main characteristics of present-day English, and an attempt will be made to connect the teachings of linguistic history with the chief events in the general history of the English people so as to show their mutual bearings on each other and the relation of language to national character. The knowledge that the latter conception is a very difficult one to deal with scientifically, as it may easily tempt one into hasty generalizations, should make us wary, but not deter us from grappling with problems which are really both interesting and important. My plan will be, first to give a rapid sketch of the language of our own days, so as to show how it strikes a foreigner—a foreigner who has devoted much time to the study of English, but who feels that in spite of all his efforts he is only able to look at it as a foreigner does, and not exactly as a native would—and then in the following chapters to enter more deeply into the history of the language in order to describe its first shape, to trace the various foreign influences it has undergone, and to give an account of its own inner growth.

2. It is, of course, impossible to characterize a language in one formula; languages, like men, are too composite to have their whole essence summed up in one short expression. Nevertheless, there is one expression that continually comes to my mind whenever I think of the English language and compare it with others. it seems to me positively and expressly *masculine*, it is the language of a grown-up man and has very little childish or feminine about it. A great many things go together to produce and to confirm that impression, things phonetical, grammatical, and lexical, words and turns that are found, and words and turns that are not found, in the language. In dealing with the English language one is often reminded of the characteristic English hand-writing; just as an English lady will nearly always write in a manner that in any other country would only be found in a man's hand, in the same manner the language is more manly than any other language I know.

3. First I shall mention the sound system. The English consonants are well defined; voiced and voiceless consonants stand over against each other in neat symmetry, and they are, as a rule, clearly and precisely pronounced. You have none of those indistinct or half-slurred consonants that abound in Danish, for instance (such as those in ha*d*e, ha*g*e, li*vlig*) where you hardly know whether it is a consonant or a vowel-glide that meets the ear. The only thing that might be compared to this in English, is the *r* when not followed by a vowel, but then this has really given up definitely all pretensions to the rank of a consonant, and is (in the pronunciation of the South of England) either frankly a vowel (as in *here*) or else nothing at all (in *hart*, etc.). Each English consonant belongs distinctly to its own type, a *t* is a *t*, and a *k* is a *k*, and there an end. There is much less modification of a consonant by the surrounding vowels than in some other languages, thus none of that palatalization of consonants which gives an insinuating grace to such languages as Russian.

The vowel sounds, too, are comparatively independent of their surroundings, and in this respect the language now has deviated widely from the character of Old English and has become more clear-cut and distinct in its phonetic structure, although, to be sure, the diphthongization of most long vowels (in *ale, whole, eel, who,* phonetically eil, houl, ijl, huw) counteracts in some degree this impression of neatness and evenness.

4. Besides these characteristics, the full nature of which cannot, perhaps, be made intelligible to any but those familiar with phonetic research, but which are still felt more or less instinctively by everybody hearing the language spoken, there are other traits whose importance can with greater ease be made evident to anybody possessed of a normal ear.

5. To bring out clearly one of these points I select at random, by way of contrast, a passage from the language of Hawaii: 'I kona hiki ana aku ilaila ua hookipa ia mai la oia me ke aloha pumehana loa.' Thus it goes on, no single word ends in a consonant, and a group of two or more consonants is never found. Can any one be in doubt that even if such a language sound pleasantly and be full of music and harmony, the total impression is childlike and effeminate? You do not expect much vigour or energy in a people speaking such a language; it seems adapted only to inhabitants of sunny regions where the soil requires scarcely any labour on the part of man to yield him everthing he wants, and where life therefore does not bear the stamp of a hard struggle against nature and against fellow-creatures. In a lesser degree we find the same phonetic structure in such languages as Italian and Spanish; but how different are our Northern tongues. English has no lack of words ending in two or more consonants, —I am speaking, of course, of the pronunciation, not of the spelling—*age, hence, wealth, tent, tempt, tempts, months, helped, feasts,* etc. etc., and thus requires, as well as presupposes, no little energy on the part of the speakers. That many suchlike consonant groups do not

tend to render the language beautiful, one is bound
readily to concede; however, it cannot be pretended
that their number in English is great enough to make
the language harsh or rough. While the fifteenth
century greatly increased the number of consonant
groups by making the *e* mute in *monthes, helped,* etc.,
the following centuries, on the contrary, lightened such
groups as *-ght* in *night, thought* (where the 'back-open'
consonant as German *ch* is still spoken in Scotch) and
the initial *kn-, gn-* in *know, gnaw,* etc. Note also the
disappearance of *l* in *alms, folk,* etc., and of *r* in *hard,
court,* etc.; the final consonant groups have also been
simplified in *comb* and the other words in *-mb* (whereas
b has been retained in *timber*) and in the exactly
parallel group *-ng,* for instance in *strong,* where now
only one consonant is heard after the vowel, a con-
sonant partaking of the nature of *n* and of *g,* but
identical with neither of them; formerly it was followed
by a real *g,* which has been retained in *stronger.*

6. In the first ten stanzas of Tennyson's 'Locksley
Hall', three hundred syllables, we have only thirty-
three words ending in two consonants, and two ending
in three, certainly no excessive number, especially if we
take into account the nature of the groups, which are
nearly all of the easiest kind (-dz: comrades, Pleiads;
-mz: gleams, comes; -nz: robin's, man's, turns; -ns:
distance, science; -ks: overlooks; -ts: gets, thoughts;
-kts: tracts, cataracts; -zd: reposed, closed; -st: rest,
West, breast, crest; -ʃt: burnish'd; -nd: sound, around,
moorland, behind, land; -nt: want, casement, went,
present; -ld: old, world; -lt: result; -lf: himself; -pt:
dipt). Thus, we may perhaps characterize English,
phonetically speaking, as possessing male energy, but
not brutal force. The accentual system points in the
same direction, as will be seen below (26—28).

7. The Italians have a pointed proverb: 'Le parole
son femmine e i fatti son maschi.' If briefness, concise-
ness and terseness are characteristic of the style of
men, while women as a rule are not such economizers

of speech, English is more masculine than most languages. We see this in a great many ways. In grammar it has got rid of a great many superfluities found in earlier English as well as in most cognate languages, reducing endings, etc., to the shortest forms possible and often doing away with endings altogether. Where German has, for instance, *alle diejenigen wilden tiere, die dort leben,* so that the plural idea is expressed in each word separately (apart, of course, from the adverb), English has *all the wild animals that live there,* where *all,* the article, the adjective, and the relative pronoun are alike incapable of receiving any mark of the plural number; the sense is expressed with the greatest clearness imaginable, and all the unstressed endings *-e* and *-en,* which make most German sentences so drawling, are avoided.

8. Rimes based on correspondence in the last syllable only of each line (as bet, set; laid, shade) are termed male rimes, as opposed to feminine rimes, where each line has two corresponding syllables, one strong and one weak (as better, setter; lady, shady). It is true that these names, which originated in France, were not at first meant to express any parallelism with the characteristics of the two sexes, but arose merely from the grammatical fact that the weak *-e* was the ending of the feminine gender (grande, etc.). But the designations are not entirely devoid of symbolic significance; there is really more of abrupt force in a word that ends with a strongly stressed syllable, than in a word where the maximum of force is followed by a weak ending. 'Thanks' is harsher and less polite than the two-syllabled 'thank you'. English has undoubtedly gained in force, what it has possibly lost in elegance, by reducing so many words of two syllables to monosyllables. If it had not been for the great number of long foreign, especially Latin, words, English would have approached

the state of such monosyllabic languages as Chinese.
Now one of the best Chinese scholars, G. v. d. Gabe-
lentz, somewhere remarks that an idea of the con-
densed power of the monosyllabism found in old Chinese
may be gathered from Luther's advice to a preacher
'Geh rasch 'nauf, tu's Maul auf, hör bald auf'. He
might with equal justice have reminded us of many
English sentences. 'First come first served' is much
more vigorous than the French 'premier venu, premier
moulu' or 'le premier venu engrène', the German
'Wer zuerst kommt, mahlt zuerst' and especially
than the Danish 'den der kommer først til mølle, får
først malet'. Compare also 'no cure, no pay', 'haste
makes waste, and waste makes want', 'live and learn',
'Love no man: trust no man: speak ill of no man to
his face; nor well of any man behind his back' (Ben
Jonson), 'to meet, to know, to love, and then to part'
(Coleridge), 'Then none were for the party; Then all
were for the state; Then the great man help'd the
poor, And the poor man loved the great' (Macaulay).

9. It will be noticed, however, — and the quotations
just given serve to exemplify this, too — that it is not
every collocation of words of one syllable that pro-
duces an effect of strength, for a great many of the
short words most frequently employed are not stressed
at all and therefore impress the ear in nearly the
same way as prefixes and suffixes do. There is nothing
particularly vigorous in the following passage from a
modern novel: 'It was as if one had met part of one's
self one had lost for a long time', and in fact most
people hearing it read aloud would fail to notice that
it consisted of nothing but one-syllable words. Such
sentences are not at all rare in colloquial prose, and
even in poetry they are found oftener than in most
languages, for instance: —

> And there a while it bode; and if a man
> Could touch or see it, he was heal'd at once,
> By faith, of all his ills.
>
> (Tennyson, *The Holy Grail*.)

But then, the weakness resulting from many small connecting words is to some extent compensated in English by the absence of the definite article in a good many cases where other languages think it indispensable, e. g. 'Merry Old England', 'Heaven and Earth'; 'life is short'; 'dinner is ready'; 'school is over'; 'I saw him at church', and this peculiarity delivers the language from a number of those short 'empty words', which when accumulated cannot fail to make the style somewhat weak and prolix.

10. Business-like shortness is also seen in such convenient abbreviations of sentences as abound in English, for instance, 'While fighting in Germany he was taken prisoner' (= while he was fighting). 'He would not answer when spoken to.' 'To be left till called for.' 'Once at home, he forgot his fears.' 'We had no idea what to do.' 'Did they run? Yes, I made them' (= made them run). 'Shall you play tennis to-day? Yes, we are going to. I should like to, but I can't.' 'Dinner over, he left the house.' Such expressions remind one of the abbreviations used in telegrams; they are syntactical correspondencies to the morphological shortenings that are also of such frequent occurrence in English: *cab* for *cabriolet*, *bus* for *omnibus*, *photo* for *photograph*, *phone* for *telephone*, and innumerable others.

11. This cannot be separated from a certain sobriety in expression. As an Englishman does not like to use more words or more syllables than are strictly necessary, so he does not like to say more than he can stand to. He dislikes strong or hyperbolical expressions of approval or admiration; 'that isn't half bad' or 'she is rather good-looking' are often the highest praises you can draw out of him, and they not seldom express the same warmth of feeling that makes a Frenchman ejaculate his 'charmant' or 'ravissante' or 'adorable'. German *kolossal* or *fabelhaft* can often be correctly rendered by English *great* or *biggish*, and where a Frenchman uses his adverbs *extrêmement* or *infini-*

ment, an Englishman says only *very* or *rather* or *pretty*. 'Quelle horreur!' is 'That's rather a nuisance'. 'Je suis ravi de vous voir' is 'Glad to see you', etc. An Englishman does not like to commit himself by being too enthusiastic or too distressed, and his language accordingly grows sober, too sober perhaps, and even barren when the object is to express emotions. There is in this trait a curious mixture of something praise-worthy, the desire to be strictly true without exagger-ating anything or promising more than you can perform, and on the other hand of something blame-worthy, the idea that it is affected, or childish and effeminate, to give vent to one's feelings, and the fear of appearing ridiculous by showing strong emo-tions. But this trait is certainly found more frequently in men than in women, so I may be allowed to add this feature of the English language to the signs of masculinity I have collected.

12. Those who use many strong words to express their likes or dislikes will generally also make an extensive use of another linguistic appliance, namely violent changes in intonation. Their voices will now suddenly rise to a very high pitch and then as sudden-ly fall to low tones. An excessive use of this emotional tonic accent is characteristic of many savage nations; in Europe it is found much more in Italy than in the North. In each nation it seems as if it were more employed by women than by men. Now, it has often been observed that the English speak in a more mono-tonous way than most other nations, so that an ex-tremely slight rising or lowering of the tone indicates what in other languages would require a much greater interval. 'Les Anglais parlent extrêmement bas', says H. Taine (*Notes sur l'Angleterre*, p. 66). 'Une société italienne, dans laquelle je me suis fourvoyé par hasard, m'a positivement étourdi; je m'étais habitué à ce ton modéré des voix anglaises.' Even English ladies are in this respect more restrained than many men belonging to other nations:

'She had the low voice of your English dames,
Unused, it seems, to need rise half a note
To catch attention.'

<div style="text-align:center">(Mrs. Browning, Aurora Leigh p. 91)[1]</div>

13. If we turn to other provinces of the language we shall find our impression strengthened and deepened.

It is worth observing, for instance, how few diminutives the language has and how sparingly it uses them. English in this respect forms a strong contrast to Italian with its *-ino* (ragazzino, fratellino, originally a double diminutive), *-ina* (donnina), *-etto* (giovinetto), *-etta* (oretta), *-ello*, *-ella* (asinello, storiella) and other endings, German with its *-chen* and *-lein*, especially South German with its *-le*, *-el*, *-erl*, Dutch with its *-je*, Russian, Magyar, and Basque with their various endings. Too frequent a recurrence of these endings · without any apparent necessity tends to produce the impression that the speakers are innocent, childish, genial beings with no great business capacities or seriousness in life. But in English there are very few of these fondling-endings; *-let* is in the first place a comparatively modern ending, very few of the words in which it is used go back more than a hundred years; and then its extensive use in modern times is chiefly due to the naturalists who want it to express in a short and precise manner certain small organs (*budlet* Darwin; *bladelet* Todd; *conelet* Dana; *bulblet* Gray; *leaflet*, *fruitlet*, *featherlet*, etc.) — an employment of the diminutive which is as far removed as possible from the terms of endearment found in other languages. The endings *-kin* and *-ling* (princekin, princeling) are not very frequently used and generally express contempt or derision. Then, of course, there is *-y*, *-ie* (Billy, Dicky, auntie, birdie, etc.) which corresponds exactly to the fondling-suffixes of other languages; but its application in English is restricted to the nursery and it is hardly ever used by grown-up people except in speaking to

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1 Cf. my *Lehrbuch der Phonetik*, 15· 34.

children. Besides, this ending is more Scotch than
English.

14. The business-like, virile qualities of the English
language also manifest themselves in such things as
word-order. Words in English do not play at hide-
and-seek, as they often do in Latin, for instance, or
in German, where ideas that by right belong together
are widely sundered in obedience to caprice or, more
often, to a rigorous grammatical rule. In English an
auxiliary verb does not stand far from its main verb,
and a negative will be found in the immediate neigh-
bourhood of the word it negatives, generally the verb
(auxiliary). An adjective nearly always stands before
its noun; the only really important exception is when
there are qualifications added to it which draw it
after the noun so that the whole complex serves the
purpose of a relative clause: 'a man every way pro-
sperous and talented' (Tennyson), 'an interruption
too brief and isolated to attract more notice' (Steven-
son). And the same regularity is found in modern
English word-order in other respects as well. A few
years ago I made my pupils calculate statistically
various points in regard to word-order in different
languages. I give here only the percentage in some
modern authors of sentences in which the subject
preceded the verb and the latter in its turn preceded
its object (as in 'I saw him' as against 'Him I saw,
but not her' or 'Whom did you see?'): —

Shelley, prose 89, poetry 85.
Byron, prose 93, poetry 81.
Macaulay, prose 82.
Carlyle, prose 87.
Tennyson, poetry 88.
Dickens, prose 91.
Swinburne, poetry 88.
Pinero, prose 97.

For the sake of comparison I mention that one
Danish prose-writer (J. P. Jacobsen) had 82, a Danish
poet (Drachmann) 61, Goethe (poetry) 80, a modern
German prose writer (Tovote) 81, Anatole France 66,

Gabriele d'Annunzio 49 per cent of the same word-
order. That English has not always had the same
regularity, is shown by the figure for Beowulf being
16, and for King Alfred's prose 40. Even if I concede
that our statistics did not embrace a sufficient num-
ber of extracts to give fully reliable results[1], still it
is indisputable that English shows more regularity
and less caprice in this respect than most or probably
all cognate languages, without however, attaining
the rigidity found in Chinese, where the percentage
in question would be 100 (or very near it). English
has not deprived itself of the expedient of inverting
the ordinary order of the members of a sentence when
emphasis requires it, but it makes a more sparing use
of it than German and the Scandinavian languages,
and in most cases it will be found that these languages
emphasize without any real necessity, especially in a
great many every-day phrases: 'dær har jeg ikke
været', 'dort bin ich nicht gewesen', 'I haven't been
there'; 'det kan jeg ikke', 'das kann ich nicht', 'I can't
do that'. In the usual phrase, 'det veed jeg ikke',
'das weiß ich nicht', *det* or *das* is often superfluously
stressed, where the Englishman does not even find
it necessary to state the object at all: 'I don't know.'
Note also that in English the subject precedes the
verb after most introductory adverbs: 'now he comes';
'there she goes', while German and Danish have,
and English had till a few centuries ago, the inverted
order: 'jetzt kommt er', 'da geht sie'; 'nu kommer
han', 'dær går hun', 'now comes he', 'there goes she'.
Thus order and consistency signalize the modern stage
of the English language.

15. No language is logical in every respect, and we
must not expect usage to be guided always by strictly
logical principles. It was a frequent error with the
older grammarians that whenever the actual grammar
of a language did not seem conformable to the rules

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1 Supplemental statistics are given by Curtis, Anglia Beiblatt
1908, p. 137.

of abstract logic they blamed the language **and wanted to correct it.** Without falling into that error **we may,** nevertheless, compare different languages **and** judge them by the standard of logic, and here **again** I think that, apart from Chinese, which has been described as pure applied logic, there is perhaps no language in the civilized world that stands so high as English. Look at the use of the tenses; the difference between the past *he saw* and the composite perfect *he has seen* is maintained with great consistency as compared with the similarly formed tenses in Danish, not to speak of German, so that one of the most constant faults committed by English-speaking Germans is the wrong use of these forms ('Were you in Berlin?' for 'Have you been in (or to) Berlin?', 'In 1815 Napoleon has been defeated at Waterloo' for 'was defeated'). And then the comparatively recent development of the expanded (or 'progressive') tenses has furnished the language with the wonderfully precise and logically valuable distinction between 'I write' and 'I am writing', 'I wrote' and 'I was writing'. French has something similar in the distinction between le passé défini (j'écrivis) and l'imparfait (j'écrivais), but on the one hand the former tends to disappear, or rather has already disappeared in the spoken language, at any rate in Paris and in the northern part of the country, so that *j'ai écrit* takes its place and the distinction between 'I wrote' and 'I have written' is abandoned; on the other hand the distinction applies only to the past while in English it is carried through all tenses. Furthermore, the distinction as made in English is superior to the similar one found in the Slavic languages, in that it is made uniformly in all verbs and in all tenses by means of the same device (*am -ing*), while the Slavic languages employ a much more complicated system of prepositions and derivative endings, which has almost to be learned separately for each new verb or group of verbs.

16. In praising the logic of the English language we must not lose sight of the fact that in most cases where, so to speak, the logic of facts or of the exterior world is at war with the logic of grammar, English is free from the narrow-minded pedantry which in most languages sacrifices the former to the latter or makes people shy of saying or writing things which are not 'strictly grammatical'. This is particularly clear with regard to number. *Family* and *clergy* are, grammatically speaking, of the singular number; but in reality they indicate a plurality. Most languages can treat such words only as singulars, but in English one is free to add a verb in the singular if the idea of unity is essential, and then to refer to this unit as *it*, or else to put the verb in the plural and use the pronoun *they*, if the idea of plurality is predominant. It is clear that this liberty of choice is often greatly advantageous. Thus we find sentences like these, 'As the clergy are or are not what they ought to be, so are the rest of the nation' (Jane Austen), or 'the whole race of man (sing.) proclaim it lawful to drink wine' (De Quincey), or 'the club all know that he is a disappointed man' (the same). In 'there are no end of people here that I don't know' (George Eliot) *no end* takes the verb in the plural because it is equivalent to 'many', and when Shelley writes in one of his letters 'the Quarterly are going to review me' he is thinking of the Quarterly (Review) as a whole staff of writers. Inversely, there is in English a freedom paralleled nowhere else of expressing grammatically a unity consisting of several parts, of saying, for instance, 'I do not think I ever spent a more delightful three weeks' (Darwin), 'for a quiet twenty minutes', 'another United States', cf. also 'a fortnight' (originally a fourteen-night); 'three years is but short' (Shakespeare), 'sixpence was offered him' (Darwin), 'ten minutes is heaps of time' (E. F. Benson), etc. etc.

17. A great many other phenomena in English show the same freedom from pedantry, as when

passive constructions such as 'he was taken no notice
of' are allowed, or when adverbs or prepositional com-
plexes may be used attributively as in 'his then resi-
dence', 'an almost reconciliation' (Thackeray), 'men in-
vite their out-College friends' (Steadman), 'smoking his
before-breakfast pipe' (Conan Doyle), 'in his thread-
bare, out-at-elbow shooting-jacket' (G. du Maurier),
or when even whole phrases or sentences may be
turned into a kind of adjective, as in 'with a quite at
home kind of air' (Smedley), 'in the pretty diamond-
cut-diamond scene between Pallas and Ulysses'
(Ruskin), 'a little man with a puffy Say-nothing-to-
me-, -or-I'll-contradict-you sort of countenance'
(Dickens), 'With an I-turn-the-crank-of-the-Universe
air' (Lowell), 'Rose is simply self-willed; a 'she will'
or 'she won't' sort of little person' (Meredith). Al-
though such combinations as the last-mentioned are
only found in more or less jocular style, they show
the possibilities of the language, and some expressions
of a similar order belong permanently to the language,
for instance, 'a would-be artist', 'a stay-at-home
man', 'a turn-up collar'. Such things — and they
might be easily multiplied — are inconceivable in
such a language as French, where everything is con-
demned that does not conform to a definite set of
rules laid down by grammarians. The French lan-
guage is like the stiff French garden of Louis XIV, while
the English is like an English park, which is laid out
seemingly without any definite plan, and in which
you are allowed to walk everywhere according to
your own fancy without having to fear a stern keeper
enforcing rigorous regulations. The English language
would not have been what it is if the English had not
been for centuries great respecters of the liberties
of each individual and if everybody had not been
free to strike out new paths for himself.

18. This is seen, too, in the vocabulary. In spite of
the efforts of several authors of high standing, the
English have never suffered an Academy to be in-

stituted among them like the French or Italian Aca-
demies, which had as one of their chief tasks the regu-
lation of the vocabulary so that every word not found in
their Dictionaries was blamed as unworthy of literary
use or distinction. In England every writer is, and
has always been, free to take his words where he
chooses, whether from the ordinary stock of every-
day words, from native dialects, from old authors,
or from other languages, dead or living. The conse-
quence has been that English dictionaries comprise a
larger number of words than those of any other nation,
and that they present a variegated picture of terms
from the four quarters of the globe. Now, it seems
to be characteristic of the two sexes in their relation
to language that women move in narrower circles
of the vocabulary, in which they attain to perfect
mastery so that the flow of words is always natural
and, above all, never needs to stop, while men know
more words and always want to be more precise in
choosing the exact word with which to render their
idea, the consequence being often less fluency and
more hesitation. It has been statistically shown that
a comparatively greater number of stammerers and
stutterers are found among men (boys) than among
women (girls). Teachers of foreign languages have
many occasions to admire the ease with which fe-
male students express themselves in another language
after so short a time of study that most men would
be able to say only few words hesitatingly and falter-
ingly, but if they are put to the test of translating
a difficult piece either from or into the foreign language,
the men will generally prove superior to the wo-
men. With regard to their native language the same
difference is found, though it is perhaps not so easy
to observe. At any rate our assertion is corroborated
by the fact observed by every student of languages
that novels written by ladies are much easier to read
and contain much fewer difficult words than those
written by men. All this seems to justify us in setting .

down the enormous richness of the English vocab-
ulary to the same masculinity of the English nation
which we have now encountered in so many various
fields.

19. To sum up· The English language is a method-
ical, energetic, business-like and sober language, that
does not care much for finery and elegance, but does
care for logical consistency and is opposed to any
attempt to narrow-in life by police regulations and
strict rules either of grammar or of lexicon. As the
language is, so also is the nation,

> For words, like Nature, half reveal
> And half conceal the Soul within. (Tennyson)

24. The consonant-shift must not be imagined as having taken place at one moment; on the contrary it must have taken centuries, and modern research has begun to point out the various stages in this development. This is not the proper place to deal with detailed explanations of this important change, as we must hurry on to more modern times; suffice it then to give a few examples to show how it affected the whole look of the language. Any *p* was changed to *f*, — thus we have *father* corresponding to *pater* and similar forms in the cognate languages; any *t* was made into *th* [þ], as in *three*, — compare Latin *tres*; any *k* became *h*, — as *cornu = horn*.[1] And as any *b* or *d* or *g*, any *bh, dh, gh* was similarly shifted, you will understand that there were comparatively few words that were not altered past recognition; still such there were, for instance *mus*, now *mouse*, which contained none of the consonants susceptible of the shifting in question.

25. The second change affected the general character of the language even more thoroughly. Where previously the stress was sometimes on the first syllable of the word, sometimes on the second, or on the third, etc., without any seeming reason and without any regard to the intrinsic importance of that syllable, a complete revolution simplified matters so that the stress rules may be stated in a couple of lines: nearly all words were stressed on the first syllable; the chief exceptions occurred only where the word was a verb beginning with one out of a definite number of prefixes, such as those we have in modern English *beget, forget, overthrow, abide*, etc. Verner has shown that this shifting of the place of the accent took place later than the Germanic consonant-shift, and we shall now inquire into the relative importance of the two.

Rask's and Grimm's merits in this discovery see *Language*, p. 48 ff.

1 Latin words are here chosen for convenience only as representing these old consonants with great fidelity, but of course it must not be supposed that the English words named come from the Latin. *P, t, k* were not shifted after *s*.

26. The consonant-shift is important to the modern
philologist, in so far as it is to him the clearest and least
ambiguous criterion of the Germanic languages: a
word with a shifted consonant is Germanic, and a word
with an unshifted consonant in any of the Germanic
languages must be a loan-word; whereas the shifted
stress is no such certain criterion, chiefly because
many words had always had the stress on the first
syllable. But if we ask about the intrinsic importance
of the two changes, that is, if we try to look at matters
from the point of view of the language itself, or rather
the speakers, we shall see that the second change is
really the more important one. It does not matter
much whether a certain number of words begin with
p or with *f*, but it does matter, or at any rate it *may*
matter, very much whether the language has a rational
system of accentuation or not; and I have no hesitation
in saying that the old stress-shift has left its indelible
mark on the structure of the language and has influ-
enced it more than any other phonetic change.[1] The
significance of the stress shift will, perhaps, appear
most clearly if we compare two sets of words in modern
English. Something like the Aryan stress system is
found in numerous words taken in recent times from
the classical languages, thus *'family, fa'miliar, famili'ar-
ity* or *'photograph, pho'tographer, photo'graphic.*[2]
The shifted Germanic system is shown in such groups as
*'love, 'lover, 'loving, 'lovingly, 'lovely, 'loveliness, 'loveless,
'lovelessness,* or *'king, 'kingdom, 'kingship, 'kingly,
'kingless,* etc. As it is characteristic of all Aryan
languages that suffixes play a much greater role than
prefixes, word formation being generally by endings,
it follows that where the Germanic stress system has
come into force, the syllable that is most important
has also the strongest stress, and that the relatively
insignificant modifications of the chief idea which are

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1 Except perhaps the disappearance of so many weak *e's* about 1400.
2 I indicate stress by means of a short vertical stroke[i] im-
mediately *before* the beginning of the strong syllable.

indicated by formative syllables are also accentually
subordinate. This is, accordingly, a perfectly logical
system, corresponding to the principal rule observed
in sentence stress, viz that the stressed words are
generally the most important ones. As, moreover,
want of stress tends everywhere to obscure vowel-
sounds, languages with movable accent are exposed
to the danger that related words, or different forms
of the same word, are made more different than
they would else have been, and their connexion is
more obscured than is strictly necessary; compare, for
instance, the two sounds in the first syllable of *family*
[æ][1] and *familiar* [ə], or the different treatment of the
vowels in *photograph, photographer* and *photographic*
['foutogra f, fo'tɔgrəfə, fouto'græfik]. The phonetic
clearness inherent in the consistent stress system is
certainly a linguistic advantage, and the obscuration
of the connexion between related words is generally
to be considered a drawback. The language of our
forefathers seems therefore to have gained considerably
by replacing the movable stress by a fixed one.

27. The question naturally arises: why was the
accent shifted in this way? Two possible answers
present themselves. The change may have been either
a purely mechanical process, by which the first syllable
was stressed without any regard to signification, or
else it may have been a psychological process, by
which the root syllable became stressed because it
was the most important part of the word. As in the
vast majority of cases the root syllable is the first,
the question must be decided from those cases where
the two things are not identical. Kluge[2] infers from
the treatment of reduplicated forms of the perfect
corresponding to Latin *cecidi, peperci,* etc. that the
shifting was a purely mechanical process; for it was
not the most important syllable that was stressed in

1 A list of the phonetic symbols used in this book will be found
on the last page.

2 Paul's *Grundriss* I 2 889.

Gothic *haihait* 'called', *rairoþ* 'reflected', *lailot* 'let'
(read *ai* as short *e*), while in the Old English forms of
these words *heht*, *reord*, *leort* the vowel of the root
syllable actually disappears. But it may be objected
to this view that the reduplicated syllable was in some
measure the bearer of the root signification, as it had
enough left of the root to remind the hearer of it, and
in pronouncing it the speaker had before him part at
least of the significant elements. The first syllable of
a reduplicated perfect must to him have been of a far
greater importance than one of those prefixes which
served only to modify to a small extent the principal
idea expressed in the root syllable. The fact that the
reduplicated syllable attracted the accent therefore
speaks less strongly in favour of the mechanical ex-
planation than does the want of stress on the verbal
prefixes in the opposite direction, so that the case seems
to me stronger for the psychological theory. In other
words, we have here a case of *value-stressing*[1]; that
part of the word which is of greatest value to the
speaker and which therefore he especially wants the
hearer to notice, is pronounced with the strongest stress.

28. We find the same principle of value-stressing
everywhere, even in those languages whose traditional
stress rests or may rest on other syllables than the root
— this word is here used not in the sense of the ety-
mologically original part of the word, but in the sense
of what is to the actual instinct of the speaker intrinsi-
cally the most significant element — but in these lan-
guages it only plays the part of causing a deviation
from the traditional stress now and then whereas in
Germanic it became *habitual* to stress the root syllable,
and this led to other consequences of some interest.
In those languages where the stress syllable is not
always the most significant one, the difference be-
tween stressed and unstressed syllables is generally less
than in the Germanic languages; there is a nicer and

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1 See my *Lehrbuch der Phonetik*, ch. 14. 8.

subtler play of accent, which we may observe in French, perhaps, better than elsewhere. In *nous chantons* the last syllable is stressed, but *chan-* is stronger than *for-* in Eng. *we forget*, because its psychological value is greater. Where a contrast is to be expressed it will most often be associated with one of the traditionally unstressed syllables, and the result is that the contrast is brought vividly before the mind with much less force than is necessary in English; in *nous chantons, et nous ne dansons pas* you need not even make *chan* and *dan* stronger, at any rate not much stronger than the endings, while in English *we sing, but we don't dance*, the syllables *sing* and *dance* must be spoken with an enormous force, because they are in themselves strongly stressed even when no contrast is to be pointed out. A still better example is French *c'est un acteur et non pas un auteur* and English *he is an actor, but not an author*; the Frenchman produces the intended effect by a slight tap, so to speak, on the two initial syllables of the contrasted words, while an Englishman hammers or knocks the corresponding syllables into the head of the hearer. The French system is more elegant, more artistic; the Germanic system is heavier or more clumsy, perhaps, in such cases as those just mentioned, but on the whole it must be said to be more rational, more logical, as an exact correspondence between the inner and the outer world is established if the most significant element receives the strongest phonetic expression. This Germanic stress-principle has been instrumental in bringing about important changes in other respects than those considered here. But what has been said here seems to me to indicate a certain connexion between language and national character; for has it not always been considered characteristic of the Germanic peoples (English, Scandinavians, Germans) that they say their say bluntly without much considering the artistic effect, and that they emphasize what is essential without always having due regard to nuances or accessory notions? and does

not the stress system we have been considering present
the very same aspect?

29. We do not know in what century the stress was
shifted[1], but the shifting certainly took place centuries
before the immigration of the English into Great
Britain   To a similar remote period we must refer
several other great changes affecting equally all the
Germanic languages. One of the most important is
the simplification of the tense system in the verb, no
Germanic language having more than two tenses, a
present and a past. As many of the old endings
gradually wore off, they were not in themselves a
sufficiently clear indication of the differences of tense,
and the apophony or gradation (ablaut) of the root
vowel, which had at first been only an incidental con-
sequence of differences of accentuation, was felt more
and more as the real indicator of tense. But neither
apophony nor the remaining endings were fit to make
patterns for the formation of tenses in new verbs; con-
sequently, we see very few additions to the old stock
of 'strong' verbs, and a new type of verbs, 'weak verbs',
is constantly gaining ground. Whatever may have been
the origin of the dental ending used in the past tense
of these verbs, it is very extensively used in all Ger-
manic languages and is, indeed, one of the character-
istic features of their inflexional system.   It has
become the 'regular' mode of forming the preterit,
that is, the one resorted to whenever new verbs are
called into existence.

30. To this early period, while the English were still
living on the Continent with their Germanic brethren,
belong the first class of loan-words. No language is

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1 Nothing can be concluded from the existence at the time of
Tacitus of such series of alliterating names for members of the
same family as *Segestes Segimerus Segimundus*, etc (Kluge, Paul's
Grundriss [2]357, 388), for alliteration does not necessarily imply
that the syllable has the chief stress of the word; cf. the French
formulas *messe et matines, Florient et Florette, Basans et Basilie,
monts et merveilles, qui vivra verra, à tort et à travers* (Nyrop,
Grammaire historique I [3]458).

Chapter III.

Old English.

33. We now come to the first of those important historical events which have materially influenced the English language, namely the settlement of Britain by Germanic tribes. The other events of paramount importance, which we shall have to deal with in succession, are the Scandinavian invasion, the Norman conquest, and the revival of learning. A future historian will certainly add the spreading of the English language in America, Australia, and South Africa. But none of these can compare in significance with the first conquest of England by the English, an event which was, perhaps, fraught with greater consequences for the future of the world in general than anything else in history. The more is the pity that we know so very little either of the people who came over or of the state of things they found in the country they invaded. We do not know exactly *when* the invasion began; the date usually given is 449, but Bede, on whose authority this date rests, wrote about three hundred years later, and much may have been forgotten in so long a period. Many considerations seem to make it more advisable to give a much earlier date[1]; however, as we must imagine that the invaders did not come all at once, but that the settlement took up a comparatively long period during which new hordes were continually arriving, the question of date is of no great consequence, and we are probably on the safe side if we say that after a long series of Germanic invasions the

1 R. Thurneysen, *Wann sind die Germanen nach England gekommen?* in Eng. Studien 22. 163.

greater part of the country was in their power in the latter half of the fifth century.

34. *Who* were the invaders, and where did they come from? This, too, has been a point of controversy[1]. According to Bede, the invaders belonged to the three tribes of Angles, Saxons, and Jutes; and linguistic history corroborates his statement in so far as we have really three dialects, or groups of dialects: the Anglian dialects in the North with two subdivisions, Northumbrian and Mercian, the Saxon dialects in the greater part of the South, the most important of which was the dialect of Wessex (West-Saxon), and the Kentish dialect, Kent having been, according to tradition, settled by the Jutes. These were closely connected linguistically with the Angles and Saxons, thus did not, like those inhabitants of Jutland whom we meet with in historical times, speak a Danish dialect. Though the Saxons were numerically superior to the Angles, the latter were influential enough to impose their name on the whole: the country is called England (OE. Englaland), the nation English (OE. Englisc, Engliscmon, cf. also Angelcynn, Angelþeod), and the language English (OE. Englisc, Englisc gereord). The continental language that shows the greatest similarity to English, is Frisian, and it is interesting to note that

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1 The complicated and often contradictory evidence, from old chroniclers, archæology, place-names and personal names, has been ably dealt with by G Schutte in *Our Forefathers* II (Cambridge 1933), 218—326, where also a full bibliography is found for each special question See also A. Erdmann, *Über die Heimat und den Namen der Angeln* Upsala 1890 — H Moller, Anzeiger fur deutsches Altertum XXII, 129 ff — O. Bremer in Paul's *Grundriß* I, 2, 115 ff., where other references will be found — Chambers, *Widsith*, 1912, p 237, 241 — J. Hoops, "Angelsachsen" in *Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde* (Strassburg 1911). — A. Brandl, *Zur Geographie der altenglischen Dialekte* (Berlin, Akademie 1915). — Luick, *Histor Grammatik*, 1921, p 10—11 — J Hoops, *Englische Sprachkunde* (Stuttgart 1923), p 5 ff — E. Wadstein, *On the Origin of the English* (Uppsala 1927). — On the question of "Standard Old English" (the language of Alfred or of Ælfric), see C. L. Wrenn, *Transact. of the Philological Soc* 1933, p. 65 ff.

that (apart from numerous place-names) only about
a dozen words did pass over into English from the
British aborigines (among them are *ass, bannock, binn,
brock*). How may we account for this very small num-
ber of loans? Are we to account for it, as some writers
would, from the unscrupulous character of the conquest,
the English having killed all those Britons who did not
run away into the mountainous districts? The supposi-
tion of wholesale slaughter seems, however, to have been
disproved by Zachrisson from the distribution of Keltic
elements in place-names and the frequent occurrence of
Keltic personal names among the Anglo-Saxons. The Bri-
tons were not exterminated, but absorbed by their Saxon
conquerors. Their civilization and language vanished,
but the race remained On the other hand, a thorough
consideration of the general conditions under which
borrowings from one language by another take place will
give us a clue to the mystery.[1] And as the whole history
of the English language may be described from one point
of view as one chain of borrowings, it will be as well at the
outset to give a little thought to this general question.

37. The whole theory of Windisch about mixed lan-

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ment of these questions in M Forster, *Keltisches Wortgut im Eng-
lischen*, Halle 1921. *Cradle*, OE *cradol*, seems to be a diminutive
of an old Germanic word meaning 'basket' (OHG. chratto) See
also *bog* in NED. Windisch, in the article quoted below, note 2,
thinks that the Germanic *tun* in English took over the meaning
of Keltic *dunum* (Latin 'arx'), but in OE *tun* had more fre-
quently the meaning of 'enclosure, yard' (cf Dutch tuin), 'en-
closed land round a dwelling', 'a single dwelling house or farm' (cf.
Old Norse *tun*; still in Devonshire and Scotland); it was only grad-
ually that the word acquired its modern meaning of village or
town, long after the influence of the Kelts must have disappeared.
— *Slogan, pibroch, clan*, etc., are modern loans from Keltic.

[1] See especially Windisch, *Zur Theorie der Mischsprachen und
Lehnwörter*. Berichte uber die Verhandl d. sächs. Gesellsch. d
Wissensch XLIX. 1897 p 101 ff. — G. Hempl, *Language-Rivalry
and Speech-Differentiation in the Case of Race-Mixture*. Trans. of
the Amer Philol. Association XXIX. 1898 p. 80 ff. — A full treat-
ment of the question of mixed languages and loan-words is found
in my own book *Language*, ch. XI.

guages turns upon this formula: it is not the foreign
language a nation learns that it turns into a mixed lan-
guage, but its own native language becomes mixed
under the influence of the foreign language. When
we try to learn and talk a foreign language we do not
intermix it with words taken from our own language;
our endeavour will always be to speak the other lan-
guage as purely as possible, generally we are painfully
conscious of every native word that we use in the
middle of phrases framed in the other tongue. But
what we thus avoid in speaking a foreign language we
very often do in our own. One of Windisch's illustra-
tions is taken from Germany in the eighteenth cen-
tury. It was then the height of fashion to imitate
everything French, and Frederick the Great prided
himself on speaking and writing good French. In his
French writings one finds not a single German word,
but whenever he wrote German, French words and
phrases in the middle of German sentences abounded,
for French was considered more refined, more *distin-
gué*. Similarly, in the last remains of Cornish, the
extinct Keltic language of Cornwall, numerous English
loan-words occur, but the English did not mix any
Cornish words with their own language, and the inhab-
itants of Cornwall themselves, whose native language
was Cornish, would naturally avoid Cornish words
when talking English, because in the first place Eng-
lish was considered the superior tongue, the language
of culture and civilization, and second, the English
would not understand Cornish words. Similarly in the
Brittany of to-day, people will interlard their Breton
talk with French words, while their French is pure,
without any Breton words. We now see why so few
Keltic words were taken over into English.[1] There was
nothing to induce the ruling classes to learn the lan-
guage of the inferior natives; it could never be fashion-
able for them to show an acquaintance with that

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1 And so few Gallic words into French.

despised tongue by using now and then a Keltic word
On the other hand the Kelt would have to learn the
language of his masters, and learn it well, he could not
think of addressing his superiors in his own unintelli-
gible gibberish, and if the first generation did not learn
good English, the second or third would, while the
influence they themselves exercised on English would
be infinitesimal. — There can be no doubt that this
theory of Windisch's is in the main correct, though we
shall, perhaps, later on see instances where it holds
good only with some qualification. At any rate we
need look for no other explanation of the fewness of
Keltic words in English.

38. About 600 A. D England was christianized, and
the conversion had far-reaching linguistic consequen-
ces. We have no literary remains of the pre-Christian
period, but in the great epic of Beowulf we see a strange
mixture of pagan and Christian elements. It took a
long time thoroughly to assimilate the new doctrine,
and, in fact, much of the old heathendom survives to
this day in the shape of numerous superstitions. On
the other hand we must not suppose that people were
wholly unacquainted with Christianity before they
were actually converted, and linguistic evidence points
to their knowing, and having had names for, the most
striking Christian phenomena centuries before they
became Christians themselves. One of the earliest loan-
words belonging to this sphere is *church*, OE. *cirice*,
cyrice, ultimately from Greek *kuriakón* '(house) of the
Lord' or rather the plural *kuriaká*. It has been well
remarked that 'it is by no means necessary that there
should have been a single *kirika* in Germany itself;
from 313 onwards, Christian churches with their sa-
cred vessels and ornaments were well-known objects
of pillage to the German invaders of the Empire: if the
first with which these made acquaintance, wherever
situated, were called *kuriaká*, it would be quite suf-
ficient to account for their familiarity with the word.'[1]

[1] See the full and able article *church* in the N. E. D. We need

They knew this word so well that when they became
Christians they did not adopt the word universally
used in the Latin church and in the Romanic languages
(*ecclesia, église, chiesa,* etc.), and the English even
extended the signification of the word *church* from
the building to the congregation, the whole body of
Christians *Minster,* OE. *mynster* from *monasterium,*
belongs also to the earliest period. Other words of
very early adoption were *devil* from *diabolus,* Greek
diábolos, and *angel,* OE. *engel*[2] from *angelus,* Greek
ággelos. But the great bulk of specifically Christian
terms did not enter the language till after the con-
version

39. The number of new ideas and things introduced
with Christianity was very considerable, and it is inter-
esting to note how the English managed to express
them in their language.[3] In the first place they adopt-
ed a great many foreign words together with the ideas.
Such words are *apostle* OE. *apostol, disciple* OF. *dis-
cipul,* which has been more of an ecclesiastical word in
English than in other languages, where it has the wider
Latin sense of 'pupil' or 'scholar', while in English it is
more or less limited to the twelve Disciples of Jesus or
to similar applications. Further, the names of the
whole scale of dignitaries of the church, from the *Pope,*
OE *papa,* downwards through *archbishop•*OE. *erce-
biscop, bishop* OE. *biscop,* to *priest* OE. *preost*; so also
monk OE *munuc, nun* OE *nunna* with *provost* OE. *pra-
fost*(præpositus) and *profost* (propositus), *abbot* OE. *abbod*

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not suppose, as is often done, that the word passed through Gothic,
where the word is not found in the literature that has come down
to us

2 See below, § 86, on the relation between the OE. and the
modern forms

8 See especially H. S MacGillivray, *The Influence of Christia-
nity on the Vocabulary of Old English* (Halle 1902). I arrange his
material from other points of view and must often pass the limits
of his book, of which only one half has appeared. — Cf. also A. Kei-
ser, *The Influence of Christianity on the Vocabulary of OE. Poetry*
(Univ. of Illinois 1919).

(*d* from Romanic form) and the feminine OE. *abbudisse*.
Here belong also such obsolete words as *sacerd* 'priest',
canonic 'canon', *decan* 'dean', *ancor* or *ancra* 'hermit'
(Latin anachoreta). To these names of persons must
be added not a few names of things, such as *shrine* OE.
scrin (scrinium), *cowl* OE. *cugcle* (cuculla), *pall* OE.
pæll or *pell* (pallium); *regol* or *reogol* '(monastic) rule',
capitul 'chapter', *mæsse* 'mass', and *offrian*, in Old
English used only in the sense of 'sacrificing, bringing
an offering'; the modern usage in 'he offered his friend
a seat and a cigar' is later and from the French.

40. It is worth noting that most of these loans were
short words that tallied perfectly well with the native
words and were easily inflected and treated in every
respect like these; the composition of the longest of
them *ercebiscop*, was felt quite naturally as a native
one. Such long words as *discipul* or *capitul*, or as *exor-
cista* and *acolitus*, which are also found, never became
popular words; and *anachoreta* only became popular
when it had been shortened to the convenient *ancor*.

41. The chief interest in this chapter of linguistic
history does not, however, to my mind concern those
words that were adopted, but those that were not.
It is not astonishing that the English should have
learnt some Latin words connected with the new faith,
but it is astonishing, especially in the light of what
later generations did, that they should have utilized
the resources of their own language to so great an
extent as was actually the case. This was done in
three ways: by forming new words from the foreign
loans by means of native affixes, by modifying the
sense of existing English words, and finally by fram-
ing new words from native stems.

At that period the English were not shy of affixing
native endings to foreign words; thus we have a great
many words in -*had* (mod. -*hood*): *preosthad* 'priest-
hood', *clerichad, sacerdhad, biscophad* 'episcopate', etc.;
also such compounds as *biscopsetl* 'episcopal see', *bis-
copscir* 'diocese', and with the same ending *profostscir*

'provostship' and the interesting *scriftscir* 'parish, con-
fessor's district' from *scrift* 'confession', a derivative
of *scrifan (shrive)* from Lat. *scribere* in the sense 'im-
pose penance, hear confession'. Note also such words
as *cristendom* 'Christendom, Christianity' (also *crist-
nes*), and *cristnian* 'christen' or rather 'prepare a can-
didate for baptism'[1] and *biscopian* 'confirm' with the
noun *biscepung* 'confirmation'.

42. Existing native words were largely turned to ac-
count to express Christian ideas, the sense only being
more or less modified. Foremost among these must be
mentioned the word *God.* Other words belonging to
the same class and surviving to this day are *sin* OE.
synn, tithe OE. *teoða,* the old ordinal for 'tenth'; *easter*
OE. *eastron* was the name of an old pagan spring festi-
val, called after Austro, a goddess of spring.[2] Most of
the native words adapted to Christian usage have since
been superseded by terms taken from Latin or French.
Where we now say *saint* from the French, the old word
was *halig* (mod. holy), preserved in *All-hallows-day*
and *Allhallow-e'en*; the Latin *sanct* was very rarely used.
Scaru, from the verb *scieran* 'shear, cut' has been sup-
planted by *tonsure, had* by *order, hadian* by *consecrate*
and *ordain, gesomnung* by *congregation, þegnung* by
service, witega by *prophet, þrowere* (from *þrowian* 'to
suffer') by *martyr, þrowerhad* or *þrowung* by *martyr-
dom, niwcumen monn* ('newcome man') by *novice, hrycg-
hrægel* (from *hrycg* 'back' and *hrægel* 'dress') by *dossal,*
and *ealdor* by *prior.* Compounds of the last-mentioned
Old English word were also applied to things connected
with the new religion, thus *teoðing-ealdor* 'dean' (chief
of ten monks). *Ealdormann,* the native term for a sort
of viceroy or lord-lieutenant, was used to denote the
Jewish High-Priests as well as the Pharisees. OE. *husl,*

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1 '*Cristnian* signifies primarily the 'prima signatio' of the
catechumens as distinguished from the baptism proper.' Mac
Gillivray p 21 Cf. *fulwian* § 44.

2 Connected with Sanscrit *usra* and Latin *aurora* and, therefore,
originally a dawn-goddess.

mod. *housel* 'the Eucharist'[1], was an old pagan word
for sacrifice or offering; an older form is seen in Gothic
hunsl. The OE. word for 'altar', *weofod*, is an inter-
esting heathen survival, for it goes back to a compound
wigbeod 'idol-table', and it was probably only because
phonetic development had obscured its connexion
with *wig* 'idol' that it was allowed to remain in use
as a Christian technical term.

43. This second class is not always easily distin-
guished from the third, or those words that had not
previously existed but were now framed out of existing
native speech-material to express ideas foreign to the
pagan world. Word-composition and other formative
processes were resorted to, and in some instances the
new terms were simply fitted together from transla-
tions of the component parts of the Greek or Latin
word they were intended to render, as when Greek
euaggélion was rendered *god-spell* (good-spell, after-
wards with shortening of the first vowel *godspell*, which
was often taken to be the 'spell' or message of God),
mod. *gospel*; thence *godspellere*, where now the foreign
word *evangelist* is used   *Heathen*, OE. *hæðen*, accord-
ing to the generally accepted theory, is derived from
hæþ 'heath' in close imitation of Latin *paganus* from
pagus 'a country district'. Cf also *þrynnes* or *þrines*
('three-ness') for *trinity*.

44. But in most cases we have no such literal ren-
dering of a foreign term, but excellent words devised
exactly as if the framers of them had never heard of
any foreign expression for the same conception — as,
perhaps, indeed, in some instances they had not. Some
of these display not a little ingenuity. The scribes and
Pharisees of the New Testament were called *boceras*
(from *boc* book) and *sunder-halgan* (from *sundor* 'apart,
asunder, separate'); in the north the latter were also
called *ælarwas* 'teachers of the Law' or *ældo* 'elders'.

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1 Still used in the nineteenth century, e. g by Tennyson, as
an archaism.

A patriarch was called *heahfæder* 'high-father' or *eald-fæder* 'old-father'; the three Magi were called *tungol-witegan* from *tungol* 'star', and *witega* 'wise man'. For 'chaplain' we have *handpreost* or *hiredpreost* ('family-priest'), for 'acolyte' different words expressive of his several functions · *huslþegn* ('Eucharist-servant'), *tapor-berend* ('taper-bearer') and *wæxberend* ('wax-bearer'); instead of *ercebiscop* 'archbishop' we sometimes find *heahbiscop* and *ealdorbiscop*. For 'hermit' *ansetla* and *westensetla* ('sole-settler', 'desert-settler') were used. 'Magic art' was called *scincræft* ('phantom-art'); 'magician' *scincræftiga* or *scinlæca, scinnere,* 'phantom' or 'superstition', *scinlac* For the disciples of Christ we find, beside *discipul* mentioned above, no less than ten different English renderings *(cniht, folgere, gingra, hieremon, læringman, leornere, leorning-cniht, leorning-man, underþeodda, þegn)* [1] To 'baptize' was expressed by *dyppan* 'dip' (cf. German *taufen,* Dan. *døbe*) or more often by *fulwian* (from *ful-wihan* 'to consecrate completely'); 'baptism' by *fulwiht* or, the last syllable being phonetically obscured, *fulluht,* and John the Baptist was called *Johannes se fulluhtere.*

45. The power and boldness of these numerous native formations can, perhaps, be best appreciated if we go through the principal compounds of *God*: *godbot* 'atonement made to the church', *godcund* 'divine, religious, sacred', *godcundnes* 'divinity, sacred office', *god-ferht* 'pious', *godgield* 'idol', *godginm* 'divine gem', *god-had* 'divine nature', *godmægen* 'divinity', *godscyld* 'impiety', *godscyldig* 'impious', *godsibb* 'sponsor', *godsibb-ræden* 'sponsorial obligations', *godspell* (cf., however, §43), *godspelbodung* 'gospel-preaching', *godspellere* 'evangelist', *godspellian* 'preach the gospel', *godspellisc* 'evangelical', *godspeltraht* 'gospel-commentary', *godspræce* 'oracle', *godsunu* 'godson', *godþrymm* 'divine majesty', *godwræc* 'impious', *godwræcnes* 'impiety'. Such a list as this, with the modern translations, shows the gulf

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1 MacGillivray p. 44.

between the old system of nomenclature, where everything was native and, therefore, easily understood by even the most uneducated, and the modern system, where with few exceptions classical roots serve to express even simple ideas, observe that although *gospel* has been retained, the easy secondary words derived from it have given way to learned formations. Nor was it only religious terms that were devised in this way; for Christianity brought with it also some acquaintance with the higher intellectual achievements in other domains, and we find such scientific terms as *læce-cræft* 'leech-craft' for medicine, *tungol-æ* ('star-law') for astronomy, *efnniht* for equinox, *sunn-stede* and *sunn-gihte* for solstice, *sunnfolgend* (sunfollower) for heliotrope, *tid* 'tide' and *gemet* 'measure' for tense and mood in grammar, *foresetnes* for preposition, etc., in short a number of scientific expressions of native origin, such as is equalled among the Germanic languages in Icelandic only.[1]

46. If now we ask, why did not the Anglo-Saxons adopt more of the ready-made Latin or Greek words, it is easy to see that the conditions here are quite different from those mentioned above when we asked a similar question with regard to Keltic   There we had a real race-mixture, where people speaking two different languages were living in actual contact in the same country. Here we have no Latin-speaking nation or community in actual intercourse with the English; and though we must suppose that there was a certain mouth-to-mouth influence from missionaries which might familiarize part of the English nation with some of the specifically Christian words, these were certainly at first introduced in far greater number through the medium of writing, exactly as is the case with Latin and Greek importations in recent times. Why, then, do we see such a difference between the practice of

1 On later Old English loans from Latin see especially O. Funke, *Die gelehrten lateinischen Lehn- und Fremdwörter in der altengl. Lit.* (Halle 1914).

that remote period and our own time? One of the
reasons seems obviously to be that people then did
not know so much Latin as they learnt later, so that
these learned words, if introduced, would not have been
understood. We have it on King Alfred's authority
that in the time immediately preceding his own reign
'there were very few on this side of the Humber who
could understand their (Latin) rituals in English, or
translate a letter from Latin into English, and I believe
that there were not many beyond the Humber. There
were so few of them that I cannot remember a single
one south of the Thames when I came to the throne ...
and there was also a great multitude of God's servants,
but they had very little knowledge of the books, for
they could not understand anything of them, because
they were not written in their language.'[1] And even
in the previous period which Alfred regrets, when 'the
sacred orders were zealous in teaching and learning', and
when, as we know from Bede and other sources[2], Latin
and Greek studies were pursued successfully in Eng-
land, we may be sure that the percentage of those who
would have understood the learned words, had they
been adopted into English, was not large. There was,
therefore, good reason for devising as many popular
words as possible. However, the manner in which our
question was put was not, perhaps, quite fair, for we
seemed to presuppose that it would be natural for a
nation to adopt as many foreign terms as its linguistic
digestion would admit, and that it would be matter
for surprise if a language had fewer foreign elements
than Modern English. But on the contrary, it is rather
the natural thing for a language to utilize its own
resources before drawing on other languages. The
Anglo-Saxon principle of adopting only such words
as were easily assimilated with the native vocabulary,

[1] King Alfred's West-Saxon Version of Gregory's Pastoral Care.
Preface (Sweet's translation).
[2] See T N Toller, *Outlines of the History of the English Lan-
guage.* Cambridge 1900, p. 68 ff.

for the most part names of concrete things, and of
turning to the greatest possible account native words
and roots, especially for abstract notions, — that
principle may be taken as a symptom of a healthful con-
dition of a language and a nation; witness Greek, where
we have the most flourishing and vigorous growth of
abstract and other scientifically serviceable terms on a
native basis that the world has ever seen, and where
the highest development of intellectual and artistic
activity went hand in hand with the most extensive
creation of indigenous words and an extremely limited
importation of words from abroad. It is not, then,
the Old English system of utilizing the vernacular
stock of words, but the modern system of neglecting
the native and borrowing from a foreign vocabulary
that has to be accounted for as something out of the
natural state of things. A particular case in point will
illustrate this better than long explanations.

47. To express the idea of a small book that is
always ready at hand, the Greeks had devised the word
egkheirídion from *en* 'in', *kheir* 'hand' and the suffix
-idion denoting smallness; the Romans similarly em-
ployed their adjective *manualis* 'pertaining to *manus*,
the hand' with *liber* 'book' understood. What could
be more natural then, than for the Anglo-Saxons to
frame according to the genius of their own language
the compound *handboc?* This naturally would be
especially applied to the one kind of handy books
that the clergy were in particular need of, the book
containing the occasional and minor public offices of
the Roman church. Similar compounds were used,
and are used, as a matter of course, in the other cog-
nate languages, — German *handbuch*, Danish *håndbog*,
etc. But in the Middle English period, *handboc* was
disused, the French (Latin) *manual* taking its place, and
in the sixteenth century the Greek word (*enchiridion*)
too was introduced into the English language. And so
accustomed had the nation grown to preferring strange
and exotic words that when in the nineteenth century

handbook made its re-appearance it was treated as an
unwelcome intruder   The oldest example of the new
use in the NED. is from 1814, when an anonymous
book was published with the title 'A Handbook for
modelling wax flowers'   In 1833 Nicolas in the preface
to a historical work wrote, 'What the Germans would
term and which, if our language admitted of the ex-
pression, would have been the fittest title for it, 'The
Handbook of History' ', — but he dared not use that
title himself.   Three years later Murray the publisher
ventured to call his guide-book 'A Hand-Book for
Travellers on the Continent', but reviewers as late as
1843 apologized for copying this coined word.   In 1838
Rogers speaks of the word as a tasteless innovation,
and Trench in his 'English Past and Present' (1854;
3rd ed. 1856 p. 71) says, 'we might have been satisfied
with 'manual', and not put together that very ugly
and very unnecessary word 'handbook', which is
scarcely, I should suppose, ten or fifteen years old'.
Of late years, the word seems to have found more
favour, but I cannot help thinking that state of lan-
guage a very unnatural one where such a very simple,
intelligible, and expressive word has to fight its way
instead of being at once admitted to the very best society.

48.   The Old English language, then, was rich in
possibilities, and its speakers were fortunate enough
to possess a language that might with very little
exertion on their part be made to express everything that
human speech can be called upon to express.   There can
be no doubt that if the language had been left to
itself, it would easily have remedied the defects that
it certainly had, for its resources were abundantly
sufficient to provide natural and expressive terms even
for such a new world of concrete things and abstract
ideas as Christianity meant to the Anglo-Saxons.   It
is true that we often find Old English prose clumsy
and unwieldy, but that is more the fault of the lite-
rature than of the language itself.   A good prose style
is everywhere a late acquirement, and the work of

whole generations of good authors is needed to bring
about the easy flow of written prose. Neither, perhaps,
were the subjects treated of in the extant Old English
prose literature those most suitable for the development
of the highest literary qualities. But if we look at such
a closely connected language as Old Norse, we find
in that language a rapid progress to a narrative prose
style which is even now justly admired in its numerous
sagas; and I do not see so great a difference between
the two languages as would justify a scepticism with
regard to the perfectibility of Old English in the same
direction. And, indeed, we have positive proof in a
few passages that the language had no mean power
as a literary medium; I am thinking of Alfred's report
of the two great Scandinavian explorers Ohthere and
Wulfstan who visited him, of a few passages in the
Saxon Chronicle, and especially of some pages of the
homilies of Wulfstan, where we find an impassioned
prose of real merit.

49. If Old English prose is undeveloped, we have a
very rich and characteristic poetic literature, ranging
from powerful pictures of battles and of fights with
mythical monsters to religious poems, idyllic descrip-
tions of an ideal country and sad ones of moods of me-
lancholy. It is not here the place to dwell upon the
literary merit of these poems, as we are only concerned
with the language. But to anyone who has taken the
trouble — and it is a trouble — to familiarize himself
with that poetry, there is a singular charm in the lan-
guage it is clothed in, so strangely different from modern
poetic style. The movement is slow and leisurely; the
measure of the verse does not invite us to hurry on rap-
idly, but to linger deliberately on each line and pause
before we go on to the next. Nor are the poet's thoughts
too light-footed; he likes to tell us the same thing two
or three times. Where a single *he* would suffice he pre-
fers to give a couple of such descriptions as 'the brave
prince, the bright hero, noble in war, eager and spiri-
ted' etc., descriptions which add no new trait to the

mental picture, but which, nevertheless, impress us
artistically and work upon our emotions, very much
like repetitions and variations in music. These effects
are chiefly produced by heaping synonym on syno-
nym, and the wealth of synonymous terms found in
Old English poetry is really astonishing, especially in
certain domains, which had for centuries been the stock
subjects of poetry. For 'hero' or 'prince' we find in
Beowulf alone at least thirty-six words *(œðeling.
œscwiga. aglœca. beadorinc. beaggyfa. bealdor. beorn.
brego. brytta. byrnwiga. ceorl. cniht. cyning. dryhten.
ealdor. eorl. eðelweard. fengel. frea. freca. fruma. hœleð.
hlaford. hyse. leod. mecg. nið. oretta. rœswa. rinc. secg.
þegn. þengel. þeoden. wer. wiga)*. For 'battle' or 'fight'
we have in Beowulf at least twelve synonyms *(beadu.
guð. heaðo. hild. lindplega. nið. orleg. rœs. sacu. geslyht.
gewinn. wig)*. Beowulf has seventeen expressions for
the 'sea' *(brim. flod. garsecg. hœf. heaðu? holm. holm-
wylm. hronrad. lagu. mere. merestrœt. sœ. seglrad. stream.
wœd. wœg. yþ)*, to which should be added thirteen more
from other poems *(flodweg. flodwielm. flot. flotweg.
holmweg. hronmere. mereflod. merestream. sœflod. sœholm.
sœstream. sœweg. yþmere)*. For 'ship' or 'boat' we
have in Beowulf eleven words *(bat. brenting. ceol.
fœr. flota. naca. sœbat. sœgenga. sœwudu. scip. sund-
wudu)* and in other poems at least sixteen more
words *(brimhengest. brimþisa. brimwudu. cnearr. flod-
wudu. flotscip. holmœrn. merebat. merehengest. mereþyssa.
sœflota. sœhengest. sœmearh. yþbord. yþhengest. yþhof.
yþlid. yþlida)*.

50. How are we to account for this wealth of syn-
onyms? We may subtract, if we like, such compound
words as are only variations of the same comparison,
as when a ship is called a sea-horse, and then different
words for sea *(sœ, mere, yþ)* are combined with the
words *hengest* 'stallion' and *mearh* 'mare'; but even if
this class is not counted, the number of synonyms is
great enough to call for an explanation. A language
has always many terms for those things that interest

the speakers in their daily doings; thus Sweet says: 'if we open an Arabic dictionary at random, we may expect to find something about a camel: 'a young camel', 'an old camel', 'a strong camel', 'to feed a camel on the fifth day', 'to feel a camel's hump to ascertain its fatness', all these being not only simple words, but root-words'.[1] And when we read that the Araucanians (in Chile) distinguished nicely in their languages between a great many shades of hunger, our compassion is excited, as Gabelentz remarks.[2] In the case of the Anglo-Saxons, however, the conclusion we are justified in drawing from their possessing such a great number of words connected with the sea is not, perhaps, that they were a seafaring nation, but rather, as these words are chiefly poetical and not used in prose, that the nation *had been* seafaring, but had given up that life while reminiscences of it were still lingering in their imagination.

51. In many cases we are now unable to see any difference in signification between two or more words, but in the majority of these instances we may assume that even if, perhaps, the Anglo-Saxons in historical times felt no difference, their ancestors did not use them indiscriminately It is characteristic of primitive peoples that their languages are highly specialized, so that where we are contented with one generic word they have several specific terms. The aborigines of Tasmania had a name for each variety of gum-tree and wattle-tree, etc., but they had no equivalent for the expression 'a tree'. The Mohicans have words for cutting various objects, but none to convey *cutting* simply. The Zulus have such words as 'red cow', 'white cow', 'brown cow', etc., but none for 'cow' generally. In Cherokee, instead of one word for 'washing' we find different words, according to what is washed, 'I wash myself, — my head, — the head of somebody

1 Sweet, *The Practical Study of Language*, 1899, p. 163.
2 Gabelentz, *Sprachwissenschaft* 1891, 468.

else, — my face, — the face of somebody else, — my
hands or feet, — my clothes, — dishes, — a child, etc.[1]

52. Too little has been done hitherto to investigate
the exact shades of meaning in Old English words[2], but
I have little doubt that when we now render a number
of words indiscriminately by 'sword', they meant origin-
ally distinct kinds of swords, and so in other cases as
well. With regard to washing, we find something corre-
sponding, though in a lesser degree, to the exuberance
of Cherokee, for we have two words, *wacsan (wascan)*
and *þwean*, and if we go through all the examples given
in Bosworth and Toller's Dictionary, we find that the
latter word is always applied to the washing of persons
(hands, feet, etc.), never to inanimate objects, while
wascan is used especially of the washing of clothes, but
also of sheep, of 'the inwards' (of the victim, Leviticus
I, 9 and 13)[3]. Observe also that *wascan* was originally
used in the present tense only (as Kluge infers from
-*sk*-), — a clear instance of that restriction in the use
of words which is so common in the old stages of the
language, but which so often appears unnatural to us.

53. The old poetic language on the whole showed a
great many divergences from everyday prose, in the
choice of words, in the word-forms, and also in the
construction of the sentences. King Alfred in his prose
always uses the form *het* as the preterit of *hatan*, but
when he breaks out occasionally into a few lines of
poetry he says *heht* instead. This should not surprise
us, for we find the same thing everywhere, and the
difference between the dictions of poetry and of prose

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1 Jespersen, *Language*, London 1922, p. 480ff.

2 A notable contribution towards this study is L. Schücking,
Untersuchungen zur Bedeutungslehre der angels. Dichtersprache,
Heidelberg 1915.

3 In a late text (R Ben. 59, 7) we find the contrast *agðer ge
fata þwean, ge wætercladas wascan*, which does not agree exactly
with the distinction made above. — Curiously enough in Old
Norse, *vaska* is in the Sagas used only of washing the head with
some kind of soap. In Danish, as well as in English, *vaske, wash*,
is now the only word in actual use.

is perhaps greater in old or more primitive languages than in those most highly developed. In English, certainly, the distance between poetical and prose language was much greater in this first period than it has ever been since The language of poetry seems to have been to a certain extent identical all over England, a kind of more or less artificial dialect, absorbing forms and words from the different parts of the country where poetry was composed at all, in much the same way as Homer's language had originated in Greece. This hypothesis seems to me to offer a better explanation of the facts than the current theory, according to which the bulk of Old English poetry was written at first in Northumbrian dialect and later translated into West-Saxon with some of the old Anglian forms kept inadvertently — and translated to such an extent that no trace of the originals should have been preserved. The very few and short pieces extant in old Northumbrian dialect are easily accounted for, even if we accept the theory of a poetical *koinê* or standard language prevailing in the time when Old English poetry flourished. But the whole question should be taken up by a more competent hand than mine.

54. The external form of Old English poetry was in the main the same as that of Old Norse, Old Saxon, and Old High German poetry; besides definite rules of stress and quantity, which were more regular than might at first appear, but which were not so strict as those of classical poetry, the chief words of each line were tied together by alliteration, that is, they began with the same sound, or, in the case of *sp, st, sc*, with the same sound group. The effect is peculiar, and may be appreciated in such a passage as this (I italicize the alliterative letters):

> *Str*æt wæs *st*anfah, *st*ig wisode
> *g*umum ætgædere. *G*uðbyrne scan
> *h*eard *h*ondlocen, *h*ringiren scir
> *s*ong in *s*earwum, þa hie to *s*ele furðum
> in hyra *g*ryregeatwum *g*angan cwomon.
> *S*etton *s*æmeðe *s*ide scyldas,

4*

rondas regnhearde wiþ þæs recedes weal;
bugon þa to bence, — byrnan hringdon,
guþsearo gumena; garas stodon,
sæmanna searo samod ætgædere,
æscholt ufan græg, wæs se irenþreat
wæpnum gewurðad. þa þær wlonc hæleþ
oretmecgas æfter æðelum frægn:
'Hwanon ferigeaþ ge fætte scyldas,
græge syrcan, ond grimhelmas,
herescealfta heap? Ic eom Hroðgares
ar ond ombiht. Ne seah ic elþeodige
þus manige men modiglicran
Wen ic þæt ge for wlenco, nalles for wræcsiðum,
ac for higeþrymmum Hroðgar sohton'.[1]

55. Very rarely, combined with alliteration we find
a sort of rime or assonance. In the prose of the last
period of Old English the same artistic means were
often resorted to to heighten the effect, and we find
in Wulfstan's homilies such passages as the following,
where all tricks of phonetic harmony are brought into
play: 'in mordre and on manc, in susle and on sare,
in wean and on wyrmslitum, betweonan deadum and
deoflum, in bryne and on biternesse, in bealewe and on
bradum ligge, in yrmþum, and on earfeðum, on swylt-

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[1] Beowulf 320 ff.; in W. E. Leonard's rendering:

The street was laid with bright
                          stones;   the road led on the band;
The battle-byrnies shimmered,   the hard, the linked-by-hand,
The iron-rings, the gleaming,   amid their armor sang,
Whilst thither, in dread war-gear, to hall they marched along,
The ocean-weary warriors   set down their bucklers wide,
Their shields, so hard and hardy, against that House's side,
They stacked points up, these
                          seamen,   their ash-wood, gray-tipped
                                                           spears;
And bent to bench, as clanked   their byrnies, battle-gears—
An iron-troop well-weaponed!   Then proud a Dane forthwith
Did of these men-at-arms there   enquire the kin and kith:
"Ye bear these plated bucklers   hither from what realms;
These piled shafts of onset,   gray sarks, and visored helms?
The Henchman and the Herald   of Hrothgar, lo, am I!
Never so many strangers   I've seen of mood more high.
I ween that it is for prowess,   and not for exile far,
That 't is indeed for glory,   that ye have sought Hrothgár."

cwale and sarum sorgum, in fyrenum bryne and on
fulnesse, in toða gristbitum and in tintegrum' or again
'þær is êce ece and þær is sorgung and sargung, and a
singal heof; þær is benda bite and dynta dyne, þær is
wyrma slite and ealra wædla gripe, þær is wanung and
granung, þær is yrmða gehwylc and ealra deofla
geþring'.[1]

56. Nor has this love of alliterative word-combina-
tions ever left the language; we find it very often in
modern poetry, where however it is always subordinate
to end-rime, and we find it in such stock phrases as—:
it can neither *make* nor *mar* me, *busy* as *bees* (Chaucer,
E 2422), *part* and *parcel*, *faint* and *feeble*, *ducks* and
drakes (sometimes: play dick-duck-drake; Stevenson,
Merry Men 277), what ain't *missed* ain't *mourned*
(Pinero, Magistrate 5), as *bold* as *brass*, *free* and *franke*
(Caxton, Reynard 41), *barnes* are *blessings* (Shakesp.,
All's I. 3. 28), as *cool* as a *cucumber*, as *still* as (a) *stone*
(Chaucer, E 121, as any stoori E 171, he stode stone
style, Malory 145), over *stile* and *stone* (Chaucer B
1988), from *top* to *toe* (from the top to toe, Shakesp.
R 3 III. 1. 155), *might* and *main*, *fuss* and *fume*,
manners makyth *man*, *care* *killed* a cat, *rack* and *ruin*,
nature and *nurture* (Shakesp. Tp. IV. 1. 189; English
Men of Science, their Nature and Nurture, the title
of a book by Galton), etc. etc , even to Thackcray's 'faint
fashionable fiddle-faddle and feeble court slipslop'.
Alliteration sometimes modifies the meaning of a word,
as when we apply *chick* to human offspring in 'no chick

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1 'In murder and in crime, in torment and grief, in pangs and
in snakebites, between dead men and devils, in flames and in tor-
ture, in harm and in extensive fire, in misery and labour, in agony ·
and serious sorrows, in blazing flames and in filth, in tooth-gnashing
and in torments', and 'There is eternal ache and sorrow and lamen-
tation, and never-ending grief, there is gnawing of chains and noise
of blows; there snakes will bite and all miseries attack; there are
groanings and moanings, troubles of every kind and a crowding
together of all devils'. Wulfstan, Homilies, ed by Napier, p. 187,
209. It is worthy of note that these poetical flights occur in de-
scriptions of hell.

or child', or when we say 'a *labour* of *love*', without
giving to *labour* the shade of meaning which it gener-
ally has as different from *work*. The word *foe*, too,
which is generally used in poetry or archaic prose only,
is often used in ordinary prose for the sake of alliter-
ation in connexion with *friend* ('Was it an irruption
of a friend or a foe?' Meredith, *Egoist* 439; 'The Danes
of Ireland had changed from foes to friends', Green,
Short Hist. 107). Indeed alliteration comes so natural
to English people, that Tennyson says that 'when
I spout my lines first, they come out so alliteratively that
I have sometimes no end of trouble to get rid of the
alliteration'.[1] I take up the thread of my narrative
after this short digression.

1 *Life*, by his Son, Tauchn ed. II. 285, cf R. L. Stevenson, *The
Art of Writing* 31, and what the Danish poet and metricist E. v. d.
Recke says to the same effect, *Principerne for den danske verskunst*
1881, p 112, see also the amusing note by De Quincey, *Opium
Eater* p. 96 (Macmillan's Library of Engl. Classics): 'Some people
are irritated, or even fancy themselves insulted, by overt acts of
alliteration, as many people are by puns, On their account let me
say, that although there are here [in the passage to which the note is
appended] eight separate f's in less than half a sentence, this is to
be held as pure accident In fact, at one time there were nine f's
in the original cast of the sentence, until I, in pity of the affronted
people, substituted *female agent* for *female friend*.' The reader need
not be reminded of the excessive use of alliteration in Euphuism
and of Shakespeare's satire in *Love's Labour's Lost* and *Midsummer
Night's Dream*.

Chapter IV.

The Scandinavians.

57. The Old English language, as we have seen, was essentially self-sufficing; its foreign elements were few and did not modify the character of the language as a whole. But we shall now consider three very important factors in the development of the language, three superstructures, as it were, that came to be erected on the Anglo-Saxon foundation, each of them modifying the character of the language, and each preparing the ground for its successor. A Scandinavian element, a French element, and a Latin element now enter largely into the texture of the English language, and as each element is characteristically different from the others, we shall treat them separately. First, then, the Scandinavian element.[1]

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1 The chief works on these loan-words, most of them treating nearly exclusively phonetic questions, are Erik Björkman, *Scandinavian Loan-Words in Middle English* (Halle I 1900, II 1902), an excellent book; Erik Brate, *Nordische Lehnwörter im Orrmulum* (Beiträge zur Gesch. d. deutschen Sprache X, Halle 1884), Arnold Wall, *A Contribution towards the Study of the Scandinavian Element in the English Dialects* (Anglia XX, Halle 1898); G. T. Flom, *Scandinavian Influence on Southern Lowland Scotch* (New York, 1900) The dialectal material of the two last mentioned treatises is necessarily to a great extent of a doubtful character. See also Kluge in Paul's *Grundriss d. germ. Philol.* 2nd ed. p. 931 ff. (Strassburg 1899), Skeat, *Principles of English Etymology* p. 453 ff. (Oxford 1887), P. Thorson, *Anglo-Norse Studies* (Amsterdam 1936), and some other works mentioned below. I have excluded doubtful material; but a few of the words I give as Scandinavian, have been considered as native by other writers. In most cases I have been convinced by the reasons given by Björkman.

58. The English had resided for about four centuries
in the country called after them, and during that time
they had had no enemies from abroad. The only wars
they had been engaged in were internal struggles be-
tween kingdoms belonging to, but not yet feeling them-
selves as one and the same nation. The Danes were to
them not deadly enemies but a brave nation from over
the sea, that they felt to be of a kindred race with them-
selves. The peaceful relations between the two nations
may have been more intimate than is now generally
supposed. An attempt has been made to show that an
interesting, but hitherto mysterious Old English poem
which is generally ascribed to the eighth century is a
translation of a lost Scandinavian poem dealing with
an incident in what was later to become the Volsunga
Saga.[1] If this were not rather doubtful it would estab-
lish a literary intercourse between England and
Scandinavia previous to the Viking ages, and therefore
accord with the fact that the old Danish legends about
King Hrothgar and his beautiful hall Heorot were
preserved in England, even more faithfully than by
the Danes themselves. Had the poet of *Beowulf* been
able to foresee all that his countrymen were destined
to suffer at the hands of the Danes, he would have
chosen another subject for his great epic, and we should
have missed the earliest noble outcome of the sym-
pathy so often displayed by Englishmen for the for-
tunes of Denmark. But as it is, in *Beowulf* no coming
events cast their shadow before[2], and the English nation
seems to have been taken entirely by surprise when

1 W W. Lawrence, *The First Riddle of Cynewulf*; W. H. Scho-
field, *Signy's Lament.* (Publications of the Modern Language
Association of America, vol. XVII.   Baltimore 1902.)

2 This was written before Schucking (*Beiträge* 42. 347) had
called in question the date usually assigned to *Beowulf* (ab. 700).
Schucking thinks it was written ab 900 at a Scandinavian court
in England See against this R. W Chambers, *Beowulf* 2 nd ed.,
(Cambridge 1932), p 322, 397, 487. — On different strata in *Beowulf*
see espescially W. A. Berendsohn, *Zur Vorgeschichte des Beowulf*
(Copenhagen 1935).

about 790 the long series of inroads began, in which
'Danes' and 'heathens' became synonyms for murderers
and plunderers. At first the strangers came in small
troops and disappeared as soon as they had filled their
boats with gold and other valuables; but from the
middle of the ninth century, 'the character of the
attack wholly changed. The petty squadrons which
had till now harassed the coast of Britain made way
for larger hosts than had as yet fallen on any country
in the west; while raid and foray were replaced by the
regular campaign of armies who marched to conquer,
and whose aim was to settle on the land they won'[1].
Battles were fought with various success, but on the
whole the Scandinavians proved the stronger race and
made good their footing in their new country. In the
peace of Wedmore (878), King Alfred, the noblest and
staunchest defender of his native soil, was fain to
leave them more than half of what we now call England;
all Northumbria, all East Anglia and one half of Central
England made out the district called the Danelaw.

59. Still, the relations between the two races were
not altogether hostile. King Alfred not only effected
the repulse of the Danes, he also gave us the first geo-
graphical description of the countries that the fierce in-
vaders came from, in the passage already referred to
(§ 48). Under the year 959, one of the chroniclers says
of the Northumbrian king that he was widely revered
on account of his piety, but in one respect he was
blamed: 'he loved foreign vices too much and gave
heathen (i. e. Danish) customs a firm footing in this
country, alluring mischievous foreigners to come to
this land.' And in the only extant private letter in
Old English[2] the unknown correspondent tells his
brother Edward that 'it is a shame for all of you to
give up the English customs of your fathers and to
prefer the customs of heathen men, who grudge you

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1 J. R. Green, *A Short History of the Engl People*, Illustr. ed.
p. 87.

2 Edited by Kluge, Engl. Studien VIII. 62.

your very life; you show thereby that you despise
your race and your forefathers with these bad habits,
when you dress shamefully in Danish wise with bared
neck and blinded eyes' (with hair falling over the
eyes?). We see, then, that the English were ready
to learn from, as well as to fight with the Danes. It
is a small, but significant fact that in the glorious
patriotic war-poem written shortly after the battle
of Maldon (993) which it celebrates, we find for the
first time one of the most important Scandinavian loan-
words, *to call*; this shows how early the linguistic in-
fluence of the Danes began to be felt.

60. A great number of Scandinavian families settled in
England never to return, especially in Norfolk, Suffolk
and Lincolnshire, but also in Yorkshire, Northumber-
land, Cumberland, Westmoreland, etc. Numerous
names of places, ending in *-by, -thorp (-torp), -beck,
-dale, -thwaite*, etc., bear witness to the preponderance
of the invaders in great parts of England, as do also
many names of persons found in English from about
1000 A. D.[1] But these foreigners were not felt by the
natives to be foreigners in the same manner as the
English themselves had been looked upon as foreigners
by the Kelts. As Green has it, 'when the wild burst of
the storm was over, land, people, government reap-
peared unchanged. England still remained England; the
conquerors sank quietly into the mass of those around
them; and Woden yielded without a struggle to Christ.
The secret of this difference between the two invasions
was that the battle was no longer between men of
different races. It was no longer a fight between Briton
and German, between Englishman and Welshman. The
life of these northern folk was in the main the life of the

1 Björkman, *Nordische Personennamen in England* (Halle 1910),
H Lindkvist, *Middle-English Place-Names of Scandinavian Origin*
(Upsala 1912), E Ekwall, *Scandinavians and Celts in the North-
West of England* (Lund 1918), and in *Introduction to the Survey
of Engl Place-Names* I (Cambridge 1924). According to Ekwall,
the Scandinavians in the North-West did not come direct from
Norway, but through Ireland.

earlier Englishmen. Their customs, their religion, their
social order were the same; they were in fact kinsmen
bringing back to an England that had forgotten its
origins the barbaric England of its pirate forefathers.
Nowhere over Europe was the fight so fierce, because
nowhere else were the combatants men of one blood
and one speech. But just for this reason the fusion
of the northmen with their foes was nowhere so peace-
ful and so complete.'[1] — It should be remembered,
too, that it was a Dane, King Knut, who achieved
what every English ruler had failed to achieve, the
union of the whole of England into one peaceful realm.

61. King Knut was a Dane, and in the Saxon Chron-
icle the invaders were always called Danes, but from
other sources we know that there were Norwegians too
among the settlers. Attempts have been made to de-
cide by linguistic tests which of the two nations had the
greater influence in England[2], a question beset with
considerable difficulties and which need not detain us
here. Suffice it to say that some words, such as ME.
boun, Mod. *bound* 'ready' (to go to), *busk, boon, addle*,
point rather to a Norwegian origin, while others, such
as *-by* in place-names, *drown*, ME. *sum* 'as', agree
better with Danish forms. In the great majority of
cases, however, the Danish and Norwegian forms were
at that time either completely or nearly identical, so
that no decision as to the special homeland of the
English loans is warranted. In the present work I
therefore leave the question open, quoting Danish or
ON. (Old Norse, practically = Old Icelandic) forms

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1 J. R. Green, *A Short History of the Engl. People*, Illustr. ed.
p. 87.

2 Brate thought the loan-words exclusively Danish; Kluge,
Wall, and Björkman consider some of them Danish, others Nor-
wegian, though in details they arrive at different results. See
Björkman, *Zur dialektischen Provenienz der nordischen Lehnwörter
im Englischen*, Språkvetensk. sällskapets förhandlingar 1898—1901,
Upsala, and his *Scand Loan-Words* p 281ff. Cf. also Ekwall as
quoted on p. 58 and J. Hoops, *Englische Sprachkunde* (Stuttgart
1923), p. 26f.

according as it is most convenient in each case, meaning simply Scandinavian.[1]

62. In order rightly to estimate the Scandinavian influence it is very important to remember how great the similarity was between Old English and Old Norse. To those who know only modern English and modern Danish, this resemblance is greatly obscured, first on account of the dissimilarities that are unavoidable when two nations live for nearly one thousand years with very little intercommunication, and when there is, accordingly, nothing to counterbalance the natural tendency towards differentiation, and secondly on account of a powerful foreign influence to which each nation has in the meantime been subjected, English from French, and Danish from Low German. But even now we can see the essential conformity between the two languages, which in those times was so much greater as each stood so much nearer to the common source. An enormous number of words were then identical in the two languages, so that we should now have been utterly unable to tell which language they had come from, if we had had no English literature before the invasion, nouns such as *man, wife, father, folk, mother, house, thing, life, sorrow, winter, summer*, verbs like *will, can, meet, come, bring, hear, see, think, smile, ride, stand, sit, set, spin*, adjectives and adverbs like *full, wise, well, better, best, mine* and *thine, over* and *under*, etc etc. The consequence was that an Englishman would have no great difficulty in understanding a viking, nay we have positive evidence that Norse people looked upon the English language as one with their own. On the other hand, Wulfstan speaks of the invaders as 'people who do not know your language' (ed Napier, p. 295), and in many cases indeed the

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1 Bjorkman's final words are 'These facts would seem to point to the conclusion that a considerable number of Danes were found everywhere in the Scandinavian settlements, while the existence in great numbers of Norwegians was confined to certain definite districts '

words were already so dissimilar that they were easily
distinguished, for instance, when they contained an
original *ai*, which in OE. had become long *a* (OE.
swan = ON. *sveinn*), or *au*, which in OE. had become
ea (OE. *leas* = ON. *lauss, louss*), or *sk*, which in Eng-
lish became *sh* (OE. *scyrte*, now *shirt* = ON. *skyrta*).

63. But there are, of course, many words to which
no such reliable criteria apply, and the difficulty in de-
ciding the origin of words is further complicated by the
fact that the English would often modify a word, when
adopting it, according to some more or less vague feel-
ing of the English sound that corresponded generally
to this or that Scandinavian sound. Just as the name
of the English king Æðelred Eadgares sunu is men-
tioned in the Norse saga of Gunnlaugr Ormstunga as
Aðalráðr Játgeirsson, in the same manner *shift* is an
Anglicized form of Norse *skipta*[1]; ON. *brúdlaup* 'wed-
ding' was modified into *brydlop* (cf. OE. *bryd* 'bride';
a consistent Anglicizing would be *brydhleap*); *tiðende*
is unchanged in Orrms *tiþennde*, but was generally
changed into *tiding(s)*, cf. OE. *tid* and the common
Eng. ending *-ing*; ON. *þjónusta* 'service' appears as
þeonest, þenest, and *þegnest*; ON. words with the neg-
ative prefix *ú* are made into English *un-*, e. g. *untime*
'unseasonableness', *unbain* (ON. *úbeinn*) 'not ready',
unrad or *unræd* 'bad counsel'[2]; cf. also *wæpnagetæc*
below, and others

64. Sometimes the Scandinavians gave a fresh lease
of life to obsolescent or obsolete native words. The pre-
position *till*, for instance, is found only once or twice
in OE. texts belonging to the pre-Scandinavian period,
but after that time it begins to be exceedingly common
in the North, from whence it spreads southward; it was
used as in Danish with regard to both time and space
and it is still so used in Scotch. Similarly *dale* (OE.
dæl) 'appears to have been reinforced from Norse *(dal)*,

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1 In ME. forms with *sk* are also found, Björkman p. 126.
2 Though the Scand form is also found in a few instances: *oulist*
'listless', *oumauhn* 'swoon'.

for it is in the North that the word is a living geograph-
ical name' (NED.), and *barn*, Scotch *bairn* (OE.
bearn) would probably have disappeared in the North,
as it did in the South, if it had not been strengthened
by the Scandinavian word. The verb *blend*, too, seems
to owe its vitality (as well as its vowel) to Old Norse,
for *blandan* was very rare in Old English.

65. We also see in England a phenomenon, which, I
think, is paralleled nowhere else to such an extent,
namely the existence side by side for a long time,
sometimes for centuries, of two slightly differing forms
for the same word, one the original English form and
the other Scandinavian. In the following the first
form is the native one, the form after the dash the
imported one.

66. In some cases both forms survive in standard
speech, though, as a rule, they have developed slightly
different meanings: *whole* (formerly *hool*) — *hale*; both
were united in the old phrase 'hail and hool' | *no* — *nay;*
the latter is now used only to add an amplifying remark
('it is enough, nay too much'), but formerly it was used
to answer a question, though it was not so strong a neg-
ative as *no* ('Is it true? Nay.' 'Is it not true? No') |
rear — *raise* | *from* — *fro*, now used only in 'to and
fro' | *shirt* — *skirt* | *shot* — *scot* | *shriek* — *screak,
screech* | *true* — *trigg* 'faithful, neat, tidy' | *edge* — *egg*
vb. (to egg on, 'to incite'). OE. *leas* survives only in
the suffix *-less* (nameless, etc.), while the Scand. *loose*
has entirely supplanted it as an independent word.

67. In other cases, the Scandinavian form survives
in dialects only, while the other belongs to the literary
language: *dew* — *dag* 'dew, thin rain; vb. to drizzle' |
leap — *loup* | *neat* — *nowt* 'cattle' | *church* — *kirk* |
churn — *kirn* | *chest* — *kist* | *mouth* — *mun* | *yard* —
garth 'a small piece of enclosed ground'. All these
dialectal forms belong to Scotland or the North of
England.

68. As a rule, however, one of the forms has in course
of time been completely crowded out by the other.

The surviving form is often the native form, as in the following instances: *goat — gayte* | *heathen — heythen, haithen* | *loath — laith* | *grey — gra, gro* | *few — fa, fo* | *ash(es) — ask* | *fish — fisk* | *naked — naken* | *yarn — garn* | *bench — bennk* | *star — sterne* | *worse — werre.* Similarly the Scand. *thethen, hethen, hwethen* are generally supposed to have been discarded in favour of the native forms, OE. *þanon, heonan, hwanon*, to which was added an adverbial *s: thence, hence, whence*; but in reality these modern forms may just as well be due to the Scandinavian ones; for the loss of *th* cp. *since* from *sithence (sithens,* OE. *siþþan + s).*

69. This then leads us on to those instances in which the intruder succeeded in ousting the legitimate heir. Caxton in a well-known passage gives us a graphic description of the struggle between the native *ey* and the Scandinavian *egg:*

> And certaynly our langage now used varyeth ferre from that whiche was used and spoken whan I was borne. For we englysshe men ben borne under the domynacyon of the mone, whiche is never stedfaste, but ever waverynge, wexynge one season, and waneth & dyscreaseth another season. And that comyn englysshe that is spoken in one shyre varyeth from a nother. In so moche that in my dayes happened that certayn marchauntes were in a shippe in tamyse, for to have sayled over the see into zelande. And for lacke of wynde, thei taryed atte forlond, and wente to lande for to refreshe them. And one of theym named sheffelde[1], a mercer, cam in-to an hows and axed for mete; and specyally he axyd after eggys. And the goode wyf answerde, that she coude speke no frenshe. And the marchaunt was angry, for he also coude speke no frenshe, but wolde have hadde egges, and she understode hym not. And thenne at laste a nother sayd that he wolde have eyren. Then the good wyf sayd that she understod

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1 Probably a north-country man.

hym wel. Loo, what sholde a man in thyse dayes
now wryte, egges or eyren. Certaynly it is harde to
playse every man, by cause of dyversite & chaunge
of langage.[1]

Very soon after this was written, the old English
forms *ey, eyren* finally went out of use.

70. Among other word-pairs similarly fated may be
mentioned: OE. *a*, ME *o* 'ever' — *ay* (both were found
together in the frequent phrase 'for ay and oo') | *tho* (cf.
those) — *they* | *theigh, thah, theh* and other forms —
though | *swon* — *swain* (boatswain, etc.) | *ibirde* —
birth | *eie* — *awe* | *þunresdæi* — *Thursday* | *in* (on)
þe lifte — *on lofte*, now *aloft* | *swuster* — *sister* | *chetel* —
kettle; and finally not a few words with English *y* over
against Scand. *g: yete* — *get* | *yeme* 'care, heed' —
gom(e), dialectal *gaum* 'sense, wit, tact' | *yelde* —
guild 'fraternity, association' | *yive* or *yeve* — *give*
yift — *gift.* In this last-mentioned word *gift*, not only
is the initial sound due to Scandinavian, but also the
modern meaning, for the Old English word meant 'the
price paid by a suitor in consideration of receiving a
woman to wife' and in the plural 'marriage, wedding'.
No subtler linguistic influence can be imagined than
this, where a word has been modified both with regard
to pronunciation and meaning, and curiously enough
has by that process been brought nearer to the verb
from which it was originally derived *(give)*.

71. In some words the old native form has survived,
but has adopted the signification attached in Scandi-
navian to the corresponding word; thus *dieam* in OE.
meant 'joy', but in ME. the modern meaning of 'dream'
was taken over from ON. *draumr*, Dan. *drom*; analogous
cases are *bread* (OE. *bread* 'fragment'), *bloom* (OE. *bloma*
'mass of metal'?). In one word, this same process of
sense-shifting has historical significance; the OE. *eorl*
meant vaguely a 'nobleman' or more loosely 'a brave

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1 Caxton's *Eneydos*, p. 2—3. (E.E.T S. Extra Series 57.) Cf.
R. Hittmair, *Aus Caxtons Vorreden* (Leipzig 1934), p. 110.

warrior' or 'man' generally; but under Knut it took over the meaning of the Norse *jarl* 'an under-king' or governor of one of the great divisions of the realm, thus paving the way for the present signification of *earl* as one of the grades in the (French) scale of rank. OE. *freond* meant only 'friend', whereas ON. *frændi*, Dan. *frænde* means 'kinsman', but in Orrm and other ME. texts the word sometimes has the Scand. meaning[1] and so it has to this day in Scotch and American dialects (see many instances in J. Wright's Dialect Dictionary, e. g. 'We are near friends, but we don't speak'); the Scotch proverb 'Friends agree best at a distance' corresponds to the Danish 'Frænde er frænde værst'. OE. *dwellan* or *dwelian* meant only 'to lead astray, lead into error, thwart' or intr. 'to go astray'[2]; the intransitive meanings, 'to tarry, abide, remain in a place', which correspond with the Scandinavian meanings, are not found till the beginning of the 18th century. OE. *ploh* is found only with the meaning of 'a measure of land' (still in Scotch *pleuch*), but in ME. it came to mean the implement *plough* (OE. *sulh*) as in ON. *plógr*. OE. *holm* meant 'ocean', but the modern word owes its signification of 'islet, flat ground by a river' to Scandinavian *holmr*.

72. These were cases of native words conforming to foreign speech habits; in other instances the Scandinavians were able to place words at the disposal of the English which agreed so well with other native words as to be readily associated with them, nay which were felt to be fitter expressions for the ideas than the Old English words and therefore survived. *Death* (deaþ) and *dead* are OE. words, but the corresponding verbs were *steorfan* and *sweltan*; now it is obvious that Danish

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1 Saxon Chron. 1135, which is given in the NED. as an instance of this meaning, appears to me to be doubtful.

2 *Dwelode*, in Ælfric, *Homilies* 1 384, is wrongly translated by Thorpe 'continued', so that Kluge is wrong in giving this passage as the earliest instance of the modern meaning, it means 'wandered, went astray'.

deya (now də) was more easily associated with the noun
and the adjective than the old verbs, and accordingly it
was soon adopted *(deyen,* now *die),* while *sweltan* was
discarded and the other verb acquired the more
special signification of *starving. Sæte,* Mod. E. *seat,*
was adopted because it was at once associated with
the verbs *to sit* and *to set.* The most important
importation of this kind was that of the pronominal
forms *they, them* and *their,* which entered readily into
the system of English pronouns beginning with the
same sound *(the, that, this)* and were felt to be more
distinct than the old native forms which they supplant-
ed.   Indeed these were liable to constant confusion
with some forms of the singular number *(he, him, her)*
after the vowels had become obscured, so that *he* and
hie, him and *heom, her (hire)* and *heora* could no longer
be kept easily apart. We thus find the obscured form,
which was written *a* (or *'a),* in use for 'he' till the be-
ginning of the 16th century (compare the dialectal use,
for instance in Tennyson's 'But Parson a cooms an'
a goas'), and in use for 'she' and for 'they' till the end
of the 14th century. Such a state of things would
naturally cause a great number of ambiguities; but al-
though the *th*-forms must consequently be reckoned a
great advantage to the language, it took a long time
before the old forms were finally displaced, nay, the
dative *hem* still survives in the form *'em* ('take 'em'),
which is now by people ignorant of the history of the
language taken to be a shortened *them; her* 'their' is the
only form for the possessive of the plural found in
Chaucer (who says *they* in the nominative) and there
are two or three instances in Shakespeare. One more
Scandinavian pronoun is *same,* which was speedily
associated with the native adverb *same (swa same*
'similarly'). Other words similarly connected with the
native stock are *want* (adj. and vb.), which reminded
the English of their own *wan* 'wanting', *wana* 'want'
and *wanian* 'wane, lessen', and *ill,* which must have
appeared like a stunted form of *evil,* especially to a

Scotchman who had made his own *devil* into *deil* and *even* into *ein*.

73. If now we try to find out by means of the loan-word test (see above, § 31) what were the spheres of human knowledge or activity in which the Scandinavians were able to teach the English, the first thing that strikes us is that the very earliest stratum of loan-words[1], words which by the way were soon to disappear again from the language[2], relate to war and more particularly to the navy: *orrest* 'battle', *fylcian* 'to collect, marshal', *liþ* 'fleet', *barda, cnear, scegþ* different sorts of warships, *ha* 'rowlock'. This agrees perfectly well with what the Saxon Chronicle relates about the English being inferior to the heathen in ship-building, until King Alfred undertook to construct a new kind of warships.[3]

74. Next, we find a great many Scandinavian law-terms; they have been examined by Professor Steen-strup in his well-known work on 'Danelag'.[4] He has there been able, in an astonishing number of cases, to show conclusively that the vikings modified the legal ideas of the Anglo-Saxons, and that numerous new law-terms sprang up at the time of the Scandinavian settlements which had previously been utterly unknown. Most of them were simply the Danish or Norse words, others were Anglicizings, as when ON. *vap-natak* was made into *wæpnagetæc* (later *wapentake*) or when ON. *heimsokn* appears as *hamsocn* 'house-breaking or the fine for that offence', or *saklauss* as *sacleas* 'innocent'. The most important of these juridical imports is the word *law* itself, known in England from

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1 See Björkman, p. 5.

2 They were naturally supplanted by French words, see below.

3 ON. *bāt* (boat) is generally supposed to be borrowed from OE. *bāt*, but according to E. Wadstein, *Friserna och forntida handels-vdgar* (Göteborg 1920) both were borrowed from Frisian. The latest treatment of this phonetically difficult word is by J. Sverdrup (*Maal og minne* 1922), who thinks that it is a native Scandinavian word.

4 Copenhagen 1882 (= Normannerne IV).

the 10th century in the form *lagu*, which must have
been the exact Scandinavian form, as it is the direct
fore-runner of the ON. form *lǫg*, ODan. *logh*[1]. *By-law*
is now felt to be a compound of the preposition *by* and
law, but originally *by* was the Danish *by* 'town, village'
(found in Derby, Whitby, etc.), and the Danish geni-
tive-ending is preserved in the other English form *byr-
law*. Other words belonging to this class are *niðing*
'criminal, wretch', *thriding* 'third part', preserved in
the mutilated form *riding*[2], *carlman* 'man' as opposed
to woman, *bonda* or *bunda* 'peasant', *lysing* 'freedman',
þræll, Mod. *thrall*, *mal* 'suit, agreement', *wiþermal*
'counterplea, defence', *seht* 'agreement', *stefnan* 'sum-
mon', *crafian* now *crave*, *landcop* or anglicized *landceap*
and *lahcop* or *lahceap* (for the signification see Steen-
strup p. 192 ff); *ran* 'robbery'; *infangenþeof* later *in-
fangthief* 'jurisdiction over a thief apprehended within
the manor'. It will be seen that with the exception of
law, bylaw, thrall and *crave* — the least juridical of
them all — these Danish law-terms have disappeared
from the language as a simple consequence of the Nor-
man conquerors taking into their own hands the courts
of justice and legal affairs generally. Steenstrup's
research, which is largely based on linguistic facts, may
be thus summarized. The Scandinavian settlers re-organ-
ized the administration of the realm and based it on
a uniform and equable division of the country; taxes
were imposed and collected after the Scandinavian
pattern; instead of the lenient criminal law of former
times, a virile and powerful law was introduced which
was better capable of intimidating fierce and violent
natures. More stress was laid on personal honour, as

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1 The OE. word was *æ* or *æw*, which meant 'marriage' as well
and was restricted to that sense in late OE., until it was displaced
by the French word.

2 *North-thriding* being heard as *North-riding*, in the case of the
two other ridings of Yorkshire, *East-thriding* and *West-thriding*,
the *th*-sound was assimilated to the preceding *t*, the result in all
three cases being the same misdivision of the word ('metanalysis').

when a sharp line was drawn between stealthy or clandestine crimes and open crimes attributable to obstinacy or vindictiveness. Commerce, too, was regulated so as to secure trade.

75. Apart from these legal words it would be very difficult to point out any single group of words belonging to one and the same sphere from which a superiority of any description might be concluded. *Window* is borrowed from *vindauga* ('wind-eye'); but we dare not infer that the northern settlers taught the English anything in architecture, for the word stands quite alone; besides, OE. had another word for 'window', which is also based on the eye-shape of the windows in the old wooden houses: *eagþyrel* 'eye-hole' (cf. *nosþyrel* nostril).[1] Nor does the borrowing of *steak*, ME. *steyke* from ON. *steik* prove any superior cooking on the part of the vikings. But it is possible that the Scandinavian *knives* (ME. *knif* from Scand. *knif*) were better than or at any rate different from those of other nations, for the word was introduced into French *(canif)* as well as into English.

76. If, then, we go through the lists of loan-words, looking out for words from which conclusions as to the state of culture of the two nations might be drawn, we shall be doomed to disappointment, for they all seem to denote objects and actions of the most commonplace description and certainly do not represent any new set of ideas hitherto unknown to the people adopting them. We find such everyday nouns as *husband, fellow, sky, skull, skin, wing, haven, root, skill, anger, gate*[2], etc. Among the adjectives adopted from

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1 Most European languages use the Lat. *fenestra* (G *fenster*, Dutch *venster*, Welsh *ffenester*), which was also imported from French into English as *fenester*, in use from 1290 to 1548. Slavic languages have *okno*, derived from *oko* 'eye'. On the eye-shape of old windows see R Meringer, Indogerm. Forschungen XVI 1904, p 125.

2 *Gate* 'way, road, street', frequent in some northern towns in the names of streets, frequent also in ME. adverbial phrases *algate*,

Scand. we find *meek, low, scant, loose, odd*[1], *wrong, ill, ugly, rotten.* The impression produced perhaps by this list that only unpleasant adjectives came into English from Scandinavia, is easily shown to be wrong, for *happy* and *seemly* too are derived from Danish roots, not to speak of *stor*, which was common in Middle English for 'great', and dialectal adjectives like *glegg* 'clear-sighted, clever', *heppen* 'neat, tidy', *gain* 'direct, handy', (Sc. and North E. the gainest way, ON. hinn gegnsta veg, Dan. den genneste vej). The only thing common to the adjectives then, is seen to be their extreme commonplaceness, and the same impression is confirmed by the verbs, as for instance, *thrive, die, cast, hit, take, call, want, scare, scrape, scream, scrub, scowl, skulk, bask, drown, ransack, gape, guess* (doubtful), etc. To these must be added numerous words preserved only in dialects (north country and Scotch) such as *lathe* 'barn' Dan. *lade, hoast* 'cough' Dan. *hoste, flit* 'move' Dan. *flytte, gar* 'make, do' Dan. *gøre, lait* 'search for' Dan. *lede, red up* 'to tidy' Dan. *rydde op, keek in* 'peep in', *ket* 'carrion, horseflesh, tainted flesh, rubbish', originally 'flesh, meat' as Dan. *kød*, etc., all of them words belonging to the same familiar sphere, and having nothing about them that might be called technical or indicative of a higher culture. The same is true of that large class of words which have been mentioned above (§ 65—72), where the Scandinavians did not properly bring the word itself, but modified either the form or the signification of a native word; among them we have seen such everyday words as *get, give, sister, loose, birth, awe, bread, dream*, etc.[2] It is precisely the most indispensable elements of the language

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anothergate(s) (corrupted into *anotherguess*), etc. In the sense 'manner of going' it is now spelt *gait.*

1 Cf. North-Jutland dialect (Vendsyssel) *oj* 'odd (number)'.

2 It is noticeable, too, that the native word *heaven* has been more and more restricted to the figurative and religious acceptation, while *sky* is used of the visible firmament, a meaning it has in Jutlandish dialects: the ordinary Danish meaning is 'cloud'.

that have undergone the strongest Scandinavian influence, and this is raised into certainty when we discover that a certain number of those grammatical words, the small coin of language, which Chinese grammarians term 'empty words', and which are nowhere else transferred from one language to another, have been taken over from Danish into English: pronouns like *they, them, their, the same* and probably *both*; a modal verb like Scotch *maun, mun* (ON. *munu,* Dan. *mon, monne*); comparatives like *minne* 'lesser', *min* 'less', *helder* 'rather'; pronominal adverbs like *hethen, thethen, whethen* 'hence, thence, whence', *samen* 'together'; conjunctions like *though, oc* 'and', *sum,* which for a long time seemed likely to displace the native *swa* (*so*) after a comparison, until it was itself displaced by *eallswa* > *as*; prepositions like *fro* and *till* (see above § 64).[1]

77. It is obvious that all these non-technical words can show us nothing about mental or industrial superiority; they do not bear witness to the currents of civilization; what was denoted by them cannot have been new to the English; we have here no new ideas, only new names. Does that mean, then, that the loanword test which we are able to apply elsewhere, fails in this one case, and that linguistic facts can tell us nothing about the reciprocal relations of the two races? No; on the contrary, the suggestiveness of these loans leaves nothing to be desired, they are historically significant enough. If the English loan-words in this period extend to spheres where other languages do not borrow, if the Scandinavian and the English languages were woven more intimately together, the reason must be a more intimate fusion of the two nations than is seen anywhere else. They fought like brothers and afterwards settled down peaceably, like brothers, side by side. The numbers of the Danish and Norwegian

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1 Another preposition, *umbe,* was probably to a large extent due to Scandinavian, the native form being *ymbe, embe*; but perhaps in some texts *u* in *umbe* may represent the vowel [y].

settlers must have been considerable, else they would
have disappeared without leaving such traces in the
language.

78. It might at the first blush seem reasonable to
think that what was going on among Scandinavian
settlers in England was parallel to what we see going
on now in the United States. But there is really no
great similarity between the two cases. The language
of Scandinavian and other settlers in America is often
a curious mixture, but it is very important to notice
that it is Danish or Norwegian, sprinkled with English
words: 'han har fencet sin farm og venter en god krop'
he has fenced his farm and expects a good crop; 'lad
os krosse strceten' let us cross the street, 'tag det træ'
take that tray; 'hun suede ham i courten for 25000
daler' etc. But this is *toto cælo* different from the Eng-
lish language of the middle ages. And if we do not
take into account those districts where Scandinavians
constitute the immense majority of the population and
keep up their old speech as pure as circumstances will
permit, the children or at any rate the children's chil-
dren of the immigrants speak English, and very pure
English too without any Danish admixture. The Eng-
lish language of America has no loan-words worth men-
tioning from the languages of the thousands and thou-
sands of Germans, Scandinavians, French, Poles and
others that have settled there. Nor are the reasons far
to seek.[1] The immigrants come in small groups and find
their predecessors half, or more than half, Americanized;
those belonging to the same country cannot, accord-
ingly, maintain their nationality collectively; they
come in order to gain a livelihood, generally in sub-
ordinate positions where it is important to each of them
separately to be as little different as possible from his
new surroundings, in garb, in manners, and in language.

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[1] See G. Hempl's paper on *Language-Rivalry* quoted above,
p. 35. Hempl's very short mention of the Scandinavians in England
is, perhaps, the least satisfactory portion of his paper; none of his
classes apply to our case.

The faults each individual commits in talking English, therefore, can have no consequences of lasting importance, and at any rate his children are in most respects situated like the children of the natives and learn the same language in essentially the same manner. In old times, of course, many a Dane in England would speak his mother-tongue with a large admixture of English, but that has no significance in linguistic history, for in course of time the descendants of the immigrants would no longer learn Scandinavian as their mother-tongue, but English. But that which is important, is the fact of the English themselves intermingling their own native speech with Scandinavian elements. Now the manner in which this is done shows us that the culture or civilization of the Scandinavian settlers cannot have been of a higher order than that of the English, for then we should have seen in the loan-words special groups of technical terms indicative of this superiority. Neither can their state of culture have been much inferior to that of the English, for in that case they would have adopted the language of the natives without appreciably influencing it. This is what happened with the Goths in Spain, with the Franks in France and with the Danes in Normandy, in all of which cases the Germanic tongues were absorbed into the Romanic languages.[1] It is true that the Scandinavians were, for a short time at least, the rulers of England, and we have found in the juridical loan-

1 It is instructive to contrast the old speech-mixture in England with what has been going on for the last two centuries in the Shetland Islands. Here the old Norwegian dialect ('Norn') has perished as a consequence of the natives considering it more genteel to speak English (Scotch). All common words of their speech now are English, but they have retained a certain number of Norn words, all of them technical, denoting different species of fish, fishing implements small parts of the boat or of the house and its primitive furniture, those signs in clouds, etc, from which the weather was forecast at sea, technicalities of sheep rearing, nicknames for things which appear to them ludicrous or ridiculous, etc — all of them significant of the language of a subjugated and poor population. (J. Jakobsen. *Det norrøne sprog på Shetland*, Copenhagen 1897.)

words linguistic corroboration of this fact; but the
great majority of the settlers did not belong to the rul-
ing class.   Their social standing must have been, on
the whole, slightly superior to the average of the Eng-
lish, but the difference cannot have been great, for the
bulk of Scandinavian words are of a purely democratic
character.   This is clearly brought out by a comparison
with the French words introduced in the following cen-
turies, for here language confirms what history tells
us, that the French represent the rich, the ruling, the
refined, the aristocratic element in the English nation.
How different is the impression made by the Scandi-
navian loan-words.   They are homely expressions for
things and actions of everyday importance; their char-
acter is utterly democratic.   The difference is also
shown by so many of the French words having never
penetrated into the speech of the people, so that they
have been known and used only by the 'upper ten',
while the Scandinavian ones are used by high and low
alike; their shortness too agrees with the monosyllabic
character of the native stock of words, consequently
they are far less felt as foreign elements than many
French words; in fact, in many statistical calculations
of the proportion of native to imported words in Eng-
lish, Scandinavian words have been more or less in-
advertently included in the native elements.   Just as
it is impossible to speak or write in English about high-
er intellectual or emotional subjects or about fash-
ionable mundane matters without drawing largely
upon the French (and Latin) elements, in the same
manner Scandinavian words will crop up together with
the Anglo-Saxon ones in any conversation on the thou-
sand nothings of daily life or on the five or six things
of paramount importance to high and low alike.   An
Englishman cannot *thrive* or be *ill* or *die* without Scan-
dinavian words; they are to the language what *bread*
and *eggs* are to the daily fare.   To this element of his
language an Englishman might apply what Words-
worth says of the daisy:

Thou unassuming common-place
Of Nature, with that homely face
And yet with something of a grace
  Which Love makes for thee! —

79. The form in which the words were borrowed oc-
casions very few remarks. Those nouns which in
Scand. had the nominative ending *-r*, did not keep it,
the kernel only of the word (= accus.) being taken
over. In one instance the Norse genitive-ending ap-
pears in English; the Norse phrase *á náttar þeli* 'in the
middle of the night' (*þel* means 'power, strength') was
Anglicized into *on nighter tale* (Cursor Mundi), or *bi
nighter tale* (Havelock, Chaucer etc.). The *-t* in neuters
of adjectives, that distinctive Scandinavian trait, is
found in *scant*[1], *want* and *(a)thwart*. Most Norse verbs
have the weak inflexion in English, as might be ex-
pected (*e. g. die*, which in Old Scand. was a strong
verb), but there are some noteworthy exceptions, *take,
rive, thrive*, that are strongly inflected as in Scand.
There is at least one interesting word with the Scand.
passive voice in *-sk* (from the reflexive pronoun *sik*):
busk[2] (and *bask*[3]?) but in English they are treated like
active forms. The shortness of the *sk*-forms may have
led to their being taken over as inseparable wholes,
for ON. *öðlask* and *þrivask* lost the reflexive ending
in English *addle* 'acquire, earn' and *thrive*.[4]

As the Scandinavians and the English could under-
stand one another without much difficulty it was nat-
ural that many niceties of grammar should be sacri-
ficed, the intelligibility of either tongue coming to de-
pend mainly on its mere vocabulary.[5] So when we

1 Properly *skammt*, neuter of *skammr* 'short'; the derived verb
skemta, Dan. *skemte* 'joke' is found in ME. *skemten*.

2 ON. *búa-sk* 'prepare oneself'

3 ON. *baða-sk* 'bathe oneself' (doubtful)

4 On the form of Scandinavian words see also Ekwall, *Anglia
Beiblatt* 21. 47.

5 Jespersen, *Chapters on English* p 37 Compare the explanation
of the similar simplification of Dutch in South Africa given by
H. Meyer, *Die Sprache der Buren* (Göttingen 1901), p 16. — E. Clas-

find that the wearing away and levelling of grammat-
ical forms in the regions in which the Danes chiefly
settled was a couple of centuries in advance of the same
process in the more southern parts of the country, the
conclusion does not seem unwarrantable that this ac-
celeration of the tempo of linguistic simplification is due
to the settlers, who did not care to learn English cor-
rectly in every minute particular and who certainly
needed no such accuracy in order to make themselves
understood.

80. With regard to syntax our want of adequate
early texts in Scandinavia as well as in North England
makes it impossible for us to state anything very def-
inite; but the nature of those loans which we are able
to verify, warrants the conclusion that the intimate
fusion of the two languages must certainly have in-
fluenced syntactical relations, and when we find in
later times numerous striking correspondences be-
tween English and Danish, it seems probable that some
at least of them date from the viking settlements. It is
true, for instance, that relative clauses without any
pronoun are found in very rare cases in Old English;
but they do not become common till the Middle Eng-
lish period, when they abound; the use of these clauses
is subject to the same restrictions in both languages,
so that in ninety out of a hundred instances where an
Englishman leaves out the relative pronoun, a Dane
would be able to do likewise, and vice versa. The rules
for the omission or retention of the conjunction *that* are
nearly identical. The use of *will* and *shall* in Middle
English corresponds pretty nearly with Scandinavian;
if in Old English an auxiliary was used to express fu-
turity, it was generally *sceal,* just as in modern Dutch
(zal); *wile* was rare. In Modern English the older
rules have been greatly modified, but in many cases
where English commentators on Shakespeare note di-

sen, *Mod Language Review* 14 94 thinks that the prevalence of
the plural ending -*s* over -*n* is due to the Danes, who had no pl. in -*n*,
and whose -*r* was similar to *s*.

Chapter VIII.

Native Resources.

164. However important foreign loan-words are, the chief enrichment of the language is due to those regular processes which are so familiar that any new word formed by means of them seems at once an old acquaintance. The whole history of English word-formation may be summed up as follows — that some formative elements have been gradually discarded, especially those that presented some difficulty of application, while others have been continually gaining ground, because they have admitted of being added to all or nearly all words without occasioning any change in the kernel of the word. Among the former I shall mention *-en* to denote female beings (cf. German *-in*). In Old English this had already become very impracticable because sound changes had occurred which obscured the connexion between related words. Corresponding to the masculine *þegn* 'retainer', *þeow* 'slave', *wealh* 'foreigner', *scealc* 'servant', *fox*, we find the feminine *þignen þiewen, wielen, scielcen, fyxen*. It seems clear that new generations would find difficulties in forming new feminines on such indistinct analogies, so we cannot wonder that the ending ceased to be productive and that the French ending *-ess*, which presented no difficulties, came to be used extensively (107). Of the words in *-en* mentioned, *fyxen* is the only one surviving, and its connexion with *fox* is now loosened, both through the form *vixen* (with its *v* from Southern dialects) and through the meaning, which is now most often 'a quarrelsome woman'.

165. A much more brilliant destiny was reserved for
the Old English ending *-isc.* At first it was added only
to nouns indicating nations, whose vowel it changed by
mutation; thus *Englisc,* now *English,* from *Angle,* etc.
In some adjectives, however, no mutation was possible,
e. g. *Irish,* and by analogy the vowel of the primitive
word was soon introduced into some of the adjectives,
e. g. *Scottish* (earlier *Scyttisc*), *Danish* (earlier *Denisc*).
The ending was extended first to words whose meaning
was cognate to these national names, *heathenish,* OE.
folcisc or *þeodisc* 'national' (from *folc* or *þeod* 'people');
then gradually came *childish, churlish,* etc. Each
century added new extensions, *foolish* and *feverish,*
for instance, date from the fourteenth, and *boyish*
and *girlish* from the sixteenth century, until now *-ish*
can be added to nearly any noun and adjective (swin-
ish, bookish, greenish, biggish, etc.).

166. We shall see in a later section (§ 206) that the
ending *-ing* has still more noticeably broken the bounds
of its originally narrow sphere of application. Another
case in point is the verbal suffix *-en.* It is now possible
to form a verb from any adjective fulfilling certain
phonetic conditions by adding *-en* (harden, weaken,
sweeten, sharpen, lessen). But this suffix was not used
very much before 1500, indeed most of the verbs formed
in *-en* belong to the last three centuries. Another
extensively used ending is *-er.* Old English had various
methods of forming substantives to denote agents;
from the verb *huntian* 'hunt' it had the noun *hunta*
'hunter'; from *beodan* 'announce', *boda* 'messenger,
herald'; from *wealdan* 'rule', *wealda;* from *beran* 'bear',
bora; from *sceþþan* 'injure', *sceaþa;* from *weorcan* 'work',
wyrhta 'wright' (in *wheel-wright,* etc.), though some of
these were used in compounds only; some nouns were
formed in *-end: rædend* 'ruler', *scieppend* 'creator', and
others in *-ere: blawere* 'one who blows', *blotere* 'sacri-
ficer', etc. But it seems as if there were many verbs
from which it was impossible to form any agent-noun
at all, and the reader will have noticed that even the

formation in *a* presented some difficulties, as the vowel was modified according to complicated rules. When the want of new substantives was felt, it was, therefore, more and more the ending *-ere* that was resorted to. But the curious thing is that the function of this ending was at first to make nouns, not from verbs, but from other nouns, thus OE. *bocere* 'scribe' from *boc* 'book' (already Gothic *bokareis*), compare modern *hatter, tinner, Londoner, New Englander, first-nighter*. As, however, such a word as *fisher*, OE. *fiscere*, which is derived from the noun a *fish*, OE. *fisc*, might just as well be analyzed as derived from the corresponding verb *to fish*, OE. *fiscian*, it became usual to form new agent-denoting nouns in *-er* from verbs, and in some cases these supplanted older formations (OE. *hunta*, now *hunter*). *Now* we do not hesitate to make new words in *er* from any verb, e. g. a *snorer*, a *sitter*, odd *comers* and *goers*, a total *abstainer*, etc. Combinations with an adverb (a *diner-out*, a *looker-on*) go back to Chaucer (A somnour is a renner up and down With mandements for fornicacioun, D 1284), but do not seem to be very frequent before the Elizabethan period. Note also the extensive use of the suffix to denote instruments and things, as in *slipper, rubber, typewriter, sleeper* (American = sleeping car). A variant of *-er* is *-eer*, which is liable, but only after *t*, to impart a disparaging meaning. this starts perhaps from *garreteer* and *pamphleteer*, hence the contemptuous *sonneteer, profiteer*, famous or infamous during the war, and *patrioteering* (my *Language*, p. 388, not in NED) Another variant of *-er* is *-ster*[1], which is often wrongly supposed to be a specially feminine suffix, though from the earliest times it has been used of men as well as of women, from the old *demestre*, now *deemster* or *dempster* 'a judge', and family names like *Baxter, Webster*, down to the more modern *punster, gangster, fibster, youngster*, etc. A *spinster* originally meant one who spins, but is now restricted to unmarried (old) maids. Special feminines are formed in *-stress: seamstress (sempstress), songstress*.

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1 Jespersen, *Linguistica* (Copenhagen 1933), p. 420ff.

167. Other much-used suffixes for substantives are:
-ness (goodness, truthfulness), *-dom* (Christendom,
boredom, 'Swelldom', Thackeray), *-ship* (ownership,
companionship, horsemanship), for adjectives: *-ly* (lordly,
cowardly), *-y* (fiery, churchy, creepy), *-less* (powerless,
dauntless), *-ful* (powerful, fanciful), and *-ed* (blue-eyed,
good-natured, renowned, conceited, talented; 'broad-
breasted; level-browed, like the horizon; — thighed
and shouldered like the billows; — footed like their
stealing foam', Ruskin). Prefixes of wide application
are *mis-*, *un-*, *be-*, and others. By means of these forma-
tives the English vocabulary has been and is being
constantly enriched with thousands and thousands of
useful new words.

168. There is one manner of forming verbs from
nouns and vice versa which is specifically English and
which is of the greatest value on account of the ease
with which it is managed, namely that of making them
exactly like one another. In Old English there were
a certain number of verbs and nouns of the same 'root',
but distinguished by the endings. Thus 'I love'
through the three persons singular ran *lufie lufast
lufaþ*, plural *lufiaþ*; the infinitive was *lufian*, the sub-
junctive *lufie*, pl. *lufien*, and the imperative was *lufa*,
pl *lufiaþ*. The substantive 'love' on the other hand
was *lufu*, in the other cases *lufe*, plural *lufa* or *lufe*,
lufum, *lufena* or *lufa*. Similarly 'to sleep' was *slæpan*,
pres. *slæpe slæpest, slæp(e)þ*, *slæpaþ*, subjunctive
slæpe, *slæpen*, imperative *slæp*, *slæpaþ*, while the sub-
stantive had the forms *slæp*, *slæpe*, and *slæpes* in the
singular and *slæpas*, *slæpum*, *slæpa* in the plural. If
we were to give the corresponding forms used in the
subsequent centuries, we should witness a gradual
simplification which had as a further consequence the
mutual approximation of the verbal and nominal forms.
The *-m* is changed into *-n*, all the vowels of the weak
syllables are levelled to one uniform *e*, the plural forms
of the verbs in *-þ* give way to forms in *-n*, and all the
final *n*'s eventually disappear, while in the nouns *s* is

gradually extended so that it becomes the only genitive
and almost the only plural ending. The second person
singular of the verbs retains its distinctive *-st*, but
towards the end of the Middle English period *thou*
already begins to be less used, and the polite *ye, you*,
which becomes more and more universal, claims no
distinctive ending in the verb. In the fifteenth cen-
tury, the *e* of the endings, which had hitherto been pro-
nounced, ceased to be sounded, and somewhat later *s*
became the ordinary ending of the third person singular
instead of *th*. These changes brought about the modern
scheme: —

> noun   *love loves — sleep sleeps,*
> verb. *love loves — sleep sleeps,*

where we have perfect formal identity of the two parts
of speech, only with the curious cross-relation between
them that *s* is the ending of the plural in the nouns
and of the singular (third person) in the verbs — an
accident which might almost be taken as a device for
getting an *s* into most sentences in the present tense
(the lover loves; the lovers love) and for showing by
the place of the *s* which of the two numbers is intended.

169. As a great many native nouns and verbs had
thus come to be identical in form (e. g. *blossom, care,
deal, drink, ebb, end, fathom, fight, fish, fire*), and as the
same thing happened with numerous originally French
words (e. g. *accord*, OFr. acord and acorder, *account,
arm, blame, cause, change, charge, charm, claim, combat,
comfort, copy, cost, couch*), it was quite natural that the
speech-instinct should take it as a matter of course that
whenever the need of a verb arose, it might be formed
without any derivative ending from the corresponding
substantive.[1]   Among the innumerable nouns from

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1 It is often said, even by some of the most famous recent
writers, that Modern English has given up the sharp division into
different parts of speech which was characteristic of the earlier
stages of our family of speech. This is entirely wrong: even if the
same form *love* or *sleep* may be said to belong to more than one
word-class, this is true of the isolated form only: in each separate

which verbs have been formed in this manner, we may
mention a few: *ape, awe, cook, husband, silence, time,
worship*. Nearly every word for the different parts of
the body has given rise to a homonym verb, though it
is true that some of them are rarely used: *eye, nose*
(you shall nose him as you go up the staires, Hamlet),
lip (= kiss, Shakesp.), *beard, tongue, brain* (such stuffe
as madmen tongue and braine not; Shakesp. Cymbe-
line), *jaw* (= scold, etc.), *ear* (rare = give ear to),
chin (American = to chatter), *arm* (= put one's arm
round), *shoulder* (arms), *elbow* (one's way through the
crowd), *hand, fist* (fisting each others throat, Shakesp.),
finger, thumb, breast (= oppose), *body* (forth), *skin,
stomach, limb* (they limb themselves, Milton), *knee*
(= kneel, Shakesp.), *foot*. It would be possible in a
similar way to go through a great many other cate-
gories of words; everywhere we should see the same
facility of forming new verbs from substantives.

170. The process is also very often resorted to for
'nonce-words' in speaking and in writing. Thus, a com-
mon form of retort is exemplified by the following quo-
tations: 'Trinkets! a bauble for Lydia!... So this
was the history of his trinkets! I'll *bauble* him!'
(Sheridan, Rivals V. 2). 'I was explaining the Golden
Bull to his Royal Highness.' 'I'll *Golden Bull* you, you
rascal!' roared the Majesty of Prussia (Macaulay, Bio-
graphical Ess.). 'Such a savage as that, as has just
come home from South Africa. Diamonds indeed!
I'd *diamond* him' (Trollope, Old Man's Love) — and

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case in which the word is used in actual speech it belongs definitely
to one class and to no other. The form *round* is a substantive in
'a round of the ladder', 'he took his daily round', an adjective in
'a round table', a verb in 'he failed to round the lamp-post', an
adverb in 'come round to-morrow', and a preposition in 'he walked
round the house'. Many people will say that in the sentence 'we
tead at the vicarage' we have a case of a substantive used as a verb.
The truth is that we have a real verb, just as real as *dine* or *eat*,
though derived from the substantive *tea*, and derived without any
distinctive ending in the infinitive. Cf *Philosophy of Grammar*,
p. 52 and 61 f.

in a somewhat different manner: 'My gracious Uncle.—
Tut, tut, Grace me no Grace, nor Uncle me no Uncle'
(Shakesp., R 2, cf. also Romeo III. 5. 143) 'I heartily
wish I could, but —' 'Nay, but me no buts — I have
set my heart upon it' (Scott, Antiq. ch. XI). 'Advance
and take thy prize, The diamond; but he answered,
Diamond me No diamonds! For God's love, a little
air! Prize me no prizes, for my prize is death' (Tenny-
son, Lancelot and Elaine).

171. A still more characteristic peculiarity of the
English language is the corresponding freedom with
which a form which was originally a verb is used un-
changed as a substantive. This was not possible till
the disappearance of the final -e which was found in
most verbal forms, and accordingly we see an ever
increasing number of these formations from about
1500. I shall give some examples in chronological
order, adding the date of the earliest quotation for the
noun in the NED.: *glance* 1503, *bend* 1529, *cut* 1530,
fetch 1530, *hearsay* 1532, *blemish* 1535, *gaze* 1542, *reach*
1542, *drain* 1552, *gather* 1555, *burn* 1568, *lend* 1575,
dislike 1577, *frown* 1581, *dissent* 1585, *fawn* (a servile
cringe) 1590, *dismay* 1590, *embrace* 1592, *hatch* 1597,
dip 1599, *dress* (personal attire) 1606, *flutter* 1641,
divide 1642, *build* 1667 (before the nineteenth century
apparently used by Pepys only), *harass* 1667, *haul*
1670, *dive* 1700, *go* 1727 (many of the most frequent
applications date from the nineteenth century), *hobble*
1727, *lean* (the act or condition of leaning) 1776, *bid*
1788, *hang* 1797, *dig* 1819, *find* 1825 (in the sense of
that which is found, 1847), *crave* 1830, *kill* (the act of
killing) 1825, (a killed animal) 1878. It will be seen
that the sixteenth century is very fertile in these
nouns, which is only a natural consequence of the
phonological reason given above. As, however, some
of the verb-nouns found in Elizabethan authors have
in modern times disappeared or become rare, some
grammarians have inferred that we have here a phe-
nomenon peculiar to that period and due to the general

exuberance of the Renaissance which made people
more free with their language than they have since
been. A glance at our list will show that this is a
wrong view; indeed, we use a great many formations
of this kind which were unknown to Shakespeare; he
had only the substantive *a visitation*, where we say
a visit, nor did he know our *worries*, our *kicks*, and
moves, etc., etc.

172. In some cases a substantive is formed in this
manner in spite of there being already another noun
derived from the same verb; thus *a move* has nearly
the same meaning as *removal*, *movement* or *motion*
(from which latter a new verb *to motion* is formed);
a *resolve* and *resolution*, a *laugh* and *laughter* are nearly
the same thing (though an *exhibit* is only one of the
things found at an *exhibition*). Hence we get a lively
competition started between these substantives and
forms in *-ing: meet* (especially in the sporting world)
and *meeting*, *shoot* and *shooting*, *read* (in the afternoon
I like a rest and a read) and *reading*[1], *row* (let us go
out for a row) and *rowing* (he goes in for rowing), *smoke*
and *smoking*, *mend* and *mending*, *feel* (there was a soft
feel of autumn in the air) and *feeling*. The *build* of a
house and the *make* of a machine are different from the
building of the house and the *making* of the machine.
The *sit* of a coat may sometimes be spoilt at one *sitting*,
and we speak of *dressing*, not of *dress*, in connexion
with a salad, etc. The enormous development of these
convenient differentiations belongs to the most recent
period of the language. Compared with the sets of
synonyms mentioned above (§ 188: one of the words
borrowed from Latin, etc.) this class of synonyms
shows a decided superiority, because here small differ-
ences in sense are expressed by small differences in

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1 Darwin says in one of his letters: 'I have just finished,
after several reads, your paper'; this implies that he did not
read it from beginning to end at one sitting; if he had written
'after several readings' he would have implied that he had read
it through several times.

sound, and because all these words are formed in the most regular and easy manner; consequently there is the least possible strain put on the memory.

173. In early English a noun and the verb corresponding to it were often similar, although not exactly alike, some historical reason causing a difference in either the vowel or the final consonant or both. In such pairs of words as the following the old relation is kept unchanged: a *life*, to *live;* a *calf*, to *calve*; a *grief*, to *grieve*; a *cloth*, to *clothe*; a *house*, to *house*; a *use*, to *use* —in all these the noun has the voiceless and the verb the voiced consonant. The same alternation has been imitated in a few words which had originally the same consonant in the noun as in the verb; thus *belief*, *proof*, and *excuse* (with voiceless *s*) have supplanted the older substantives in *-ve* and voiced *-se* and inversely the verb *grease* has now often voiced *s* [z] alternating with a voiceless *s*. But in a far greater number of words the tendency to have nouns and verbs of exactly the same sound has prevailed, so that we have to *knife*, to *scarf* (Shakesp.), to *elf* (id.), to *roof*, and with voiceless *s* to *loose*, to *race*, to *ice*, to *promise*, while the nouns *repose*, *cruise* (at sea), *reprieve*, owe their voiced consonants to the corresponding verbs. In this way we get some interesting doublets. Besides the old noun *bath* and verb *bathe* we have the recent verb to *bath* (will you bath baby to-day?) and the substantive *bathe* (I walked into the sea by myself and had a very decent bathe, Tennyson). Besides *glass* (noun) and *glaze* (verb) we have now also *glass* as a verb and *glaze* as a noun; so also in the case of *grass* and *graze*, *price* and *prize* (where *praise* verb and noun should be mentioned as etymologically the same word).

174. The same forces are at work in the smaller class of words, in which the distinction between the noun and the verb is made by the alternation of *ch* and *k*, as in *speech — speak*. Side by side with the old *batch* we have a new noun a *bake*, besides the noun *stitch* and the verb *stick* we have now also a verb to *stitch* (a book, etc.)

and the rare noun a *stick* (the act of sticking); besides
the old noun *stench* we have a new one from the verb
stink. The modern word *ache* (in toothache, etc.) is a
curious cross of the old noun, whose spelling has been
kept, and the old verb, whose pronunciation (with k)
has prevailed. Baret (1573) says expressly, '*Ake* is the
verb of this substantive *ache*, *ch* being turned into *k*'.
In the Shakespeare folio of 1623 the noun is always
spelt with *ch* and the verb with *k*; the verb rimes with
brake and *sake*. The noun was thus sounded like the
name of the letter *h*; and Hart (An Orthographie, 1569,
p. 35) says expressly, 'We abuse the name of h, calling
it ache, which sounde serveth very well to expresse a
headache, or some bone ache.' Indeed, the identity
in sound of the noun and the name of the letter gave
rise to one of the stock puns of the time; see for in-
stance Shakespeare (Ado III. 4. 56); 'by my troth I
am exceeding ill, hey ho. — For a hauke, a horse, or
a husband ? — For the letter that begins them all, H,'
and a poem by Heywood: It is worst among letters in
the crosse row, For if thou finde him other [= either]
in thine elbow, In thine arme, or leg . . . Where ever
you find ache, thou shalt not like him.'

175. Numerous substantives and verbs have the
same consonants, but a difference in the vowels, due
either to gradation (ablaut) or to mutation (umlaut).
But here, too, the creative powers of language may
be observed. Where in old times there was only a
noun *bit* and a verb to *bite*, we have now in addition
not only a verb to *bit* (a horse, to put the bit into its
mouth) as in Carlyle's 'the accursed hag 'dyspepsia'
had got me bitted and bridled' and in Coleridge's witty
remark (quoted in the NED.): 'It is not women and
Frenchmen only that would rather have their tongues
bitten than bitted', — but also a noun *bite* in various
meanings, e. g. in 'his bite is as dangerous as the cobra's'
(Kipling) and 'she took a bite out of the apple' (An-
thony Hope). From the noun *seat* (see above, § 72)
we have the new verb to *seat* (to place on a seat), while

the verb to *sit* has given birth to the noun *sit* (cf. § 172).
No longer content with the old *sale* as the substantive
corresponding to *sell*, in slang we have the new noun *a*
(fearful) *sell* (an imposition); cf. also the American sub-
stantive *tell* (according to their tell, see Farmer and
Henley). As *knot* (n.) was to *knit* (v.), so was *coss* to
kiss, but while of the former pair both forms have sur-
vived and have given rise to a new verb to *knot* and
a new noun a *knit* (he has a permanent knit of the
brow, NED.), from the latter the *o*-form has disap-
peared, the noun being now formed from the verb: a *kiss*.
We have the old *brood* (n.) and *breed* (v.), and the new
brood (v.) and *breed* (n.); a new verb to *blood* exists by
the side of the old to *bleed*, and a new noun *feed* by the
side of the old *food*. It is obvious that the language
has been enriched by acquiring all these newly formed
words; but it should also be admitted that there has
been a positive gain in ease and simplicity in all those
cases where there was no occasion for turning the exis-
ting phonetic difference to account by creating new verbs
or nouns in new significations, and where, accordingly,
one of the phonetic forms has simply disappeared, as
when the old verbs *sniwan*, *scrydan*, *swierman* have
given way to the new *snow*, *shroud*, *swarm*, which are
like the nouns, or when the noun *swat*, *swot* (he swette
blodes swot, Ancrene Riwle) has been discarded in
favour of *sweat*, which has the same vowel as the verb.

176. In some cases the place of the stress serves to
distinguish substantives from verbs, the former having
initial and the latter final stress. Thus some native
words with prefixes: '*forecast* sb., *fore'cast* vb., similarly
overthrow, *underline*. In the same way a great many
Romanic words are differentiated, the substantives
(adjectives) having fore-stress, the corresponding verbs
end-stress: e. g. *absent, accent, conduct, frequent, object,
present, rebel, record, subject, interdict*. Words like *com-
pliment, experiment* have an obscure vowel [ə] in the sb.,
but a full vowel [e] in the vb., even if the final syllable
has not full stress.

177. Among the other points of interest presented by the formations occupying us here I may mention the curious oscillation found in some instances between noun and verb. *Smoke* is first a noun (the smoke from the chimney), then a verb (the chimney smokes, he smokes a pipe); then a new noun is formed from the verb in the last sense (let us have a smoke). Similarly *gossip* (a) noun: godfather, intimate friend, idle talker, (b) verb: to talk idly, (c) new noun: idle talk; *dart* (a) a weapon, (b) to throw (a dart), to move rapidly (like a dart), (c) a sudden motion; *brush* (a) an instrument, (b) to use that instrument, (c) the action of using it: your hat wants a brush; *sail* (a) a piece of canvas, (b) to sail, (c) a sailing excursion; *wire* (a) a metallic thread, (b) to telegraph, (c) a telegram; so also *cable*; in vulgar language a verb is formed to *jaw* and from that a second noun a *jaw* ('what speech do you mean?' 'Why that grand jaw that you sputtered forth just now about reputation,' F. C. Philips). Sometimes the starting point is a verb, e. g. *frame* (a) to form, (b) noun: a fabric, a border for a picture, etc., (c) verb: to set in a frame; and sometimes an adjective, e. g. *faint* (a) weak, (b) to become weak, (c) a fainting fit.

178. To those who might see in the obliteration of the old distinctive marks of the different parts of speech a danger of ambiguity, I would answer that this danger is more imaginary than real. I open at random a modern novel and count on one page 34 nouns which can be used as infinitives without any change, and 38 verbs the forms of which can be used as nouns[1], while only 22 nouns and 9 verbs cannot be thus used. As some of the ambiguous nouns and verbs

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[1] Answer, brother, reply, father, room, key, haste, gate, time, head, pavement, man, waste, truth, thunder, clap, storey, bed, book, night, face, point, shame, while, eye, top, hook, finger, bell, land, lamp, taper, shelf, church, — whisper, wait, return, go, keep, call, look, leave, reproach, do, pass, come, cry, open, sing, fall, hurry, reach, snatch, he, regard, creep, lend, say, try, steal, hold, swell, wonder, interest, see, choke, shake, place, escape, ring, take, light. (I have not counted auxiliary verbs.)

occur more than once, and as the same page contains adverbs, prepositions, and conjunctions[1] which are identical with nouns (adjectives) or verbs, or both, the theoretical possibilities of mistakes arising from confusion of parts of speech would seem to be very numerous. And yet no one reading that page would feel the slightest hesitation about understanding every word correctly, as either the ending or the context shows at once whether a verb is meant or not. Even such an extreme case as this line, which is actually found in a modern song, 'Her eyes like angels watch them still' is not obscure, although *her* might be both accusative and possessive, *eyes* both noun and verb, *like* adjective, conjunction, and verb, *watch* noun and verb, and *still* adjective, verb and adverb. A modern Englishman, realizing the great advantage his language possesses in its power of making words serve in new functions, might make Shakespeare's lines his own in a different sense:

> 'So all my best is dressing old words new,
> Spending againe what is already spent'.[2]

179. Word-composition plays a very important part in English. Compounds are either fixed or free, i. e. such that when the need arises any speaker can form new compounds after the pattern of already existing combinations. The former tend to be felt as independent units, isolated from the component parts in sound and (or) in meaning. *Daisy* was originally *dayes eye*, but no one nowadays connects the word with either *day* or *eye*. *Woman* was originally *wif + man;* a reminder of the [i]-sound is kept in the plural *women; nostril*, OE. *nosu-þyrel* (the latter part means 'hole'), *fifteen, Monday, Christmas* show shortening of the first element as compared with *nose, five, moon, Christ*. Compare the treatment of the second element in the numerous place-names in *-ton*, from *town*, and in *-mouth*, pronounced [-məþ]. *Cupboard* is pronounced [kʌbəd]. Some-

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1 Back, down, still, out, home, except, like, while, straight.
2 Sonnet 76.

times there is re-composition as a reaction against iso-
lation: OE. *hūs* + *wīf* in course of time lost *w*, both
vowels were shortened, *s* was sounded [z], and *f* became *v*
or was even lost; in the derived meanings 'needle-case'
and 'jade' we find the forms *huzzif*, *huzzive*, and *huzzy*.
But in the original sense the word was constantly
revived: *housewife*. — With free compounds we may have
even long strings, like *railway refreshment room*, *New
Year Eve fancy dress ball*, his *twopence a week pocket-
money*, etc.

180. With regard to the logical relation of the parts
of a compound very few are of the same type as *tiptoe* =
tip of the toe. In the majority the first part determines
the second: a *garden flower* is a kind of flower, but a
flower garden a kind of garden. The relation of the two
parts may be very different and is left to be inferred
from the meaning of each. Compare for instance *life-
boat* on the one hand with *life-insurance*, *life member*,
lifetime, *life class* (class of painters drawing from life)
and on the other hand *steamboat*, *pilot boat*, *iron boat*,
etc. *Home letters* (from h.), *home voyage* (to), *home life*
(at). Sometimes a compound means 'at the same time
A and B': *servantman* = *man servant*, *queen-dowager*,
deaf-mute = deaf and dumb.

181. A special type of compounds is exemplified in
pick-pocket = 'one who picks pockets'. This type (verb
+ object) seems to have originated in Romanic langua-
ges, but has in modern times proved very fertile in
English: *cut-purse*, *know-nothing*, *sawbones*, *breakwater*,
stopgap, *scare-crow*, etc. Such compounds are very often
used as first parts of new compounds, in which case
they may be considered adjectives: *break-neck* pace,
a very *tell-tale* face, a *lack-lustre* eye, a *make-shift* dinner.[1]

182. While in the old type of fixed compounds the
first part had strong and the second weak stress, the
stress tends in free compounds, such as *gold coin*, *coat
tail*, *lead pencil*, *headmaster*, to be more level, so that
it often varies rhythmically according to the context.

1 MEG. II 8. 6 and 14. 7.

Each part of the compound is felt as independent of
and of equal weight with the other. As an adjective
before a substantive is now just as uninflected as a
substantive forming the first part of a compound, the
two combinations are also made syntactically equal.
They are co-ordinated in 'her Christian and *family*
name', 'all national, *State, county*, and municipal offices',
'a *Boston* young lady'. The prop-word *one* may be used
as in 'two *gold* watches and a *silver* one', 'give me a paper,
one of the *Sunday* ones'. The likeness with adjectives
is made even more obvious when an adverb is used as
in 'from a too exclusively *London* standpoint', 'in purely
Government work', 'in the most *matter-of-fact* way'.
From being often used as first parts of compounds some
substantives have really become regular adjectives and
are recognized as such by everybody: *chief, choice,
commonplace;* they may even form adverbs: *choicely,*
and substantives like *commonplaceness. Dainty,* origi-
nally a substantive meaning a delicacy (Old French
daintie from L. *dignitatem*), and *bridal* (originally *bryd-
ealu* 'bride-ale') are now practically nothing but adjec-
tives: note in both their seemingly adjectival endings.[1]

183. Having thus considered the modes of forming
new words by adding something to existing words, by
adding to them nothing at all, and by composition, we
shall end this chapter by some remarks on the formation
of new words by subtracting something from old ones.[2]
Such 'back-formations', as they are very conveniently
termed by Dr. Murray, owe their origin to one part of a
word being mistaken for some derivative suffix (or, more
rarely, prefix). The adverbs *sideling, groveling* and
darkling were originally formed by means of the ad-
verbial ending *-ling*, but in such phrases as *he walks
sideling, he lies groveling*, etc., they looked exactly like

1 See MEG. II ch XI
2 Otto Jespersen, Om subtraktionsdannelser, særligt på dansk
og engelsk, in *Festskrift til Vilh Thomsen* Copenhagen 1894. I have
treated a few classes of back-formations in *Engl Studien* 70, p 117ff.
On the subtraction of *s*, as if it were a plural sign, see below, § 198.

participles in *-ing*, and the consequence was that the
new verbs to *sidle*, to *grovel*, and to *darkle* were derived
from them by the subtraction of *-ing*. The *Banting*
cure was named after one Mr. Banting; the occasional
verb to *bant* is, accordingly, a back-formation. The
ending *-y* is often subtracted; from *greedy* is thus
formed the noun *greed* (about 1600), from *lazy* and *cosy*
the two verbs *laze* and *cose* (Kingsley), and from *jeop-
ardy* (French jeu parti) the verb *jeopard*. The old
adjective corresponding to *difficulty* was *difficile* as in
French, but about 1600 the adjective *difficult* (= the
noun minus *y*) makes its appearance. *Puppy* from
French *poupée* was thought to be formed by means of
the petting suffix *y*, and thus *pup* was created; simi-
larly I think that *cad* is from *caddy*, *caddie* = Fr. *cadet* (a
youngster) and *pet* from *petty* = Fr. *petit*, the trans-
ition in meaning from 'little' to 'favourite' being easily
accounted for. Several verbs originate from nouns in
-er (-ar, -or), which were not originally 'agent nouns';
butcher is the French *boucher*, derived from *bouc* 'a buck,
goat' with no corresponding verb, but in English it has
given rise to the rare verb to *butch* and to the noun a
butch-knife. Similarly *harbinger*, *rover*, *pedlar*, *burglar*,
hawker, and probably *beggar*, call into existence the
verbs to *harbinge* (Whitman), *rove, peddle, burgle, hawk*,
and *beg*; and the Latin words *editor, donator, vivi-
sector*, produce the un-Latin verbs to *edit, donate*
(American), *vivisect* (Meredith), etc. which look as if
they came from Latin participles.[1] Some of these back-
formations have been more successful than others in
being generally recognized in Standard English.

184. It is not usual in Germanic languages to form
compounds with a verb as the second, and an object
or a predicative as the first, part. Hence, when we
find such verbs as to *housekeep* (Kipling, Merriman), the
explanation must be that *-er* has been subtracted from
the perfectly legitimate noun a *housekeeper* (or *-ing* from
housekeeping). The oldest examples I know of this forma-
tion are to *backbite* (1300), to *partake* (parttake, 16th c.)

and to *soothsay* and *conycatch* (Shakesp.); others are to
hutkeep, common in Australia, *book-keep* (Shaw), to
dressmake, to *matchmake* (women will match-make, you
know, A. Hope), to *thoughtread* (Why don't they
thoughtread each other? H. G. Wells), to *typewrite* (I
could typewrite if I had a machine, id., also in B. Shaw's
Candida), to *merrymake* (you merrymake together, Du
Maurier) It will be seen that most of these are nonce-
words. The verbs to *henpeck* and to *sunburn* are back-
formations from the participles *henpecked* and *sunburnt;*
and Browning even says *'moonstrike* him!' (Pippa
Passes) for 'let him be moonstruck'.

185. We have seen (§ 7 ff.) that monosyllabism is
one of the most characteristic features of modern
English, and this chapter has shown us some of the
morphological processes by which the original stock
of monosyllables has been in course of time consider-
ably increased. It may not, therefore, be out of place
here briefly to give an account of some of the other
modes by which such short words have been developed.
Some are simply longer words which have been short-
ened by regular phonetic development (cf. *love* § 163);
e. g. *eight* OE. *eahta, dear* OE. *deore, fowl* OE. *fugol,
hawk* OE. *hafoc, lord* OE. *hlaford, not* and *nought* OE.
nawiht, pence OE. *penigas, ant* OE. *æmette,* etc. *Miss*
before the names of unmarried ladies is a somewhat
irregular shortening of 'missis' (mistress); though
found here and there in the seventeenth century, *Miss*
was not yet recognized in the middle of the eighteenth
century (cf. Fielding's Mrs. Bridgit, Mrs. Honour, etc.).

186. This leads us to the numerous popular clip-
pings of long foreign words, of which rarely the middle
(as in *Tench* 'the House of *Detention'* and *teck* 'detect-
ive') or the end (as in *bus* 'omnibus', *baccer, baccy*
'tobacco', *phone* 'telephone'), but more often the be-
ginning only subsists. Some of these stump-words have
never passed beyond slang, such as *sov* 'sovereign',
pub 'public-house', *confab* 'confabulation', *pop* 'po-
pular concert', *vet* 'veterinary surgeon', *Jap* 'Japanese',

guv 'Governor', *Mods* 'Moderations', an Oxford examination, *matric* 'matriculation', *prep* 'preparation' and *impot* or *impo* 'imposition' in schoolboys' slang, *sup* 'supernumerary', *props* 'properties' in theatrical slang, *perks* 'perquisites', *comp* 'compositor', *caps* 'capital letters', etc. etc. Some are perhaps now in a fair way to become recognized in ordinary speech, such as *exam* 'examination', and *bike* 'bicycle'; and some words have become so firmly established as to make the full words pass completely into oblivion, e. g. *cab* (cabriolet), *fad* (fadaise), *navvy* (navigator in the sense of canal-digger and later railway labourer) and *mob* (mobile vulgus).

187. A last group of English monosyllables comprises a certain number of words the etymology of which has hitherto baffled all the endeavours of philologists. At a certain moment such a word suddenly comes into the language, nobody knowing from where, so that we must feel really inclined to think of a creation *ex nihilo*. I am not particularly thinking of words denoting sounds or movements in a.more or less onomatopoetic way, for their origin is psychologically easy to account for, but of such words as the following, some of which belong now to the most indispensable speech material: *bad*[1], *big*[2], *lad* and *lass*, all appearing towards the end of the thirteenth century; *fit* adjective and *fit* substantive, probably two mutually independent words, the adjective dating from 1440, the substantive in the now current sense from 1547: *dad* 'father', *jump*, *crease* 'fold, wrinkle', *gloat*, and *bet* from the sixteenth century; *job*, *fun* (and *pun*), *blight*, *chum* and *hump* from the seventeenth century; *fuss*, *jam* verb and substantive, and *hoax* from the eighteenth, and *slum*, *stunt* and *blurb* from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Anyone who has watched small children

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1 See Zupitza's attempt at an explanation in the NED., which does not account for the origin of *bæddel*.

2 The best explanation is Björkman's, see *Scand. Loan Words* p. 157 and 259; but even he does not claim to have solved the mystery completely.

carefully must have noticed that they sometimes create
some such word without any apparent reason; sometimes
they stick to it only for a day or two as the name of some
plaything, etc., and then forget it; but sometimes a
funny sound takes lastingly their fancy and may even
be adopted by their playmates or parents as a real
word.[1] Without pretending that such is the origin of
all the words just mentioned I yet venture to throw
out the suggestion that some of them may be due to
children's playful inventiveness — while others may
have sprung from the corresponding linguistic play-
fulness of grown-up people which forms the funda-
mental essence of the phenomenon called *slang*.

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[1] Cf my book *Language*, p. 151 ff. On the general theory of slang
see ib. 298 ff. and *Mankind, Nation and Individual*, p. 149 ff.

Chapter IX.

Grammar.

188. The preceding chapter has already brought us near to our present province or rather has crossed its boundary, for word-formation is rightly considered one of the main divisions of grammar. In the other divisions a survey of the historical development shows us the same general tendency as word-formation does (§ 164), the tendency, as we might call it, from chaos towards cosmos. Where the old language had a great many endings, most of them with very vague meanings and applications, Modern English has but few, and their sphere of signification is more definite. The number of irregularities and anomalies, so considerable in Old English, has been greatly reduced so that now the vast majority of words are inflected regularly. It has been objected that most of the old strong verbs are still strong, and that this means irregularity in the formation of the tenses: *shake shook shaken* is just as irregular as Old English *scacan scoc scacen*. But it must be remembered, first, that there is a complete disappearance of a great many of those details of inflexion, which made every Old English paradigm much more complicated than its modern successor, such as distinctions of persons and numbers, and nearly all differences between the infinitive, the imperative, the indicative, and the subjunctive, — secondly that the number of distinct vowels has been reduced in many verbs; compare thus *beran bireþ bær bæron boren* with *bear bears bore bore born; feohtan fieht feaht fuhton fohten* with *fight fights fought fought fought; bindan band bunden* with *bind*

bound bound; berstan bœrst burston borsten with *burst
burst burst burst*, — and thirdly, that the consonant
change found in many verbs (*ceas curon, snaþ snidon,
teah tugon*) has been abolished altogether except in the
single case of *was were*. The greatest change towards
simplicity and regularity is seen in the adjectives,
where one form now represents the eleven different
forms used by the contemporaries of Alfred. But it
must not be imagined that the development has in
every minute particular made for progress; nothing
has been gained, for instance, by the modern creation
of *mine* and *thine* as primary possessive pronouns by
the side of *my* and *thy*. It is only when we compare the
entire linguistic structure of some remote period with
the structure in modern times that we observe that
the gain in clearness and simplicity has really been
enormous.

189. This grammatical development and simplifi-
cation has taken place not suddenly and from one
cause, but gradually and from a variety of causes,
most of these the same that have worked and are
working similar changes in other languages. It cannot
be said that 'the chief impulse to such changes is due
to progressive thinking and advancing culture which
made the traditional forms insufficient for the abund-
ance of ideas in their mutual relations' (Morsbach),
for some of the changes took place with greatest rapid-
ity in centuries when culture was at a low ebb. Chief
among the general causes of the decay of the Old
English apparatus of declensions and conjugations
must be reckoned the manifold incongruities of the
system: if the same vowel did not everywhere denote
the same shade of meaning, speakers would naturally
tend to indulge in the universal inclination to pro-
nounce weak syllables indistinctly (and the OE.
flexional endings were all unstressed): thus *a, i, u* of
the endings were levelled in the one colourless vowel
e, and this could even after some time be dropped alto-
gether in most cases. The same want of system would

also favour the analogical extension of those endings
which were clearest in their forms and in their sphere
of employment, thus in substantives the *s*-forms both
as genitives and as plurals[1]. But beside this general
cause we must in each separate case inquire into those
special causes that may have been at work, and even
such a seemingly small step as that by which the old
declension of *ye* (nominative) and *you* (accusative and
dative) has given way to the modern use of *you* in all
cases, has been the result of the activity of many mov-
ing forces. In the following sections I shall select a
few points of grammar, which seem to me illustrative
of the processes of change in general, and (as regards
some of them) of the progressive tendency I have
mentioned.

190. (I. The *s*-ending in nouns): In Old English the
genitive was formed in *es* in most masculines and neu-
ters, but beside this a variety of other endings were in
use with the different stems, in -*e*, in -*re*, in -*an*; some
words had no separate ending in the genitive, and
some formed a mutation-genitive (*boc* 'book', gen. *bec*).
Besides, the genitive of the plural never ended in -*s*,
but in -*a* or -*ra* or -*na* (-*ena*, -*ana*). With regard to
syntax, the genitive case filled a variety of functions,
possessive, subjective, objective, partitive, definitive,
descriptive, etc. It was used not only to connect two
substantives, but also after a great number of verbs
and adjectives (rejoice at, fear, long for, remember, fill,
empty, weary, deprive of, etc.); it sometimes stood
before and sometimes after the governing word. In
short, the rules for the formation as well as for the
employment of that case were complicated to a very
high degree. But gradually a greater regularity and

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1 This is the view I have held since 1891 and expressed more
or less explicitly in various publications, see now *Language*, books
III and IV, also *Chapters on English*. On the influence of speech-
mixture on the rapidity of movement see above, § 79; on the rapi-
dity of change due to wars, pestilences, etc. in the fourteenth and
fifteenth centuries see *Language*, p. 261.

simplicity prevailed in accidence as well as in syntax;
the *s*-genitive was extended to more and more nouns
and to the plural as well as the singular number, and
now it is the only genitive ending used in the language,
though in the plural it is in the great majority of cases
hidden away behind the *s* used to denote the plural
number (*kings'*, cf. *men's*). The position of the geni-
tive now is always immediately before the governing
word, and this in connexion with the regularity of the
formation of the case has been instrumental in bring-
ing about the modern group-genitive, where the *s* is
tacked on to the end of a word-group with no regard
to the logic of the older grammar: *the King of Eng-
land's power* (formerly 'the kinges power of England'),
the bride and bridegroom's return, somebody else's hat etc.[1]

191. As for the use of the genitive, it has been in
various ways encroached upon by the combination
with *of*. First, its use is now in ordinary prose almost
restricted to personal beings, and even such phrases as
'society's hard-drilled soldiery' (Meredith), where *so-
ciety* is personified, are felt as poetical; still more so,
of course, 'thou knowst not golds effect', (Sh.) or 'set-
ting out upon life's journey' (Stevenson). But in some
set phrases the genitive is still established, e. g. out
of *harm's* way; he is at his *wits'* (or *wit's*) end; so also
in the stock quotation from Hamlet, in my *mind's* eye,
etc. Then to indicate measure, etc.: at a *boat's* length
from the ship, and especially time: an *hour's* walk,
a good *night's* rest, *yesterday's* post; and this is even
extended to such prepositional combinations as *to-
day's* adventures, *to-morrow's* papers.

192. Secondly, the genitive (of names of persons) is
now chiefly used possessively, though this word must
be taken in a very wide sense, including such cases as
'Shelley's works', 'Gainsborough's pictures', 'Tom's
enemies', 'Tom's death', etc. The subjective genitive,

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1 See the detailed historical account of the group-genitive,
Chapters on English 1918 ch. III.

too, is in great vigour, for instance in 'the King's arri-
val', 'the Duke's invitation', 'the Duke's inviting him',
'Mrs. Poyser's repulse of the squire' (G. Eliot). Still
there is, in quite recent times, a tendency towards
expressing the subject by means of the preposition *by*,
just as in the passive voice, for instance in 'the acci-
dental discovery by Miss Knag of some correspondence'
(Dickens); 'the appropriation by a settled community
of lands on the other side of an ocean' (Seeley), 'the
massacre of Christians by Chinese'. 'Forster's Life
of Dickens' is the same thing as 'Dickens's Life, by
Forster'. — The objective genitive was formerly much
more common than now, the ambiguity of the genitive
being probably the reason of its decline. Still, we find,
for instance 'his expulsion from power by the Tories'
(Thackeray), 'What was thy pity's recompense?'
(Byron). 'England's wrongs' generally means the
wrongs done to England; thus also 'my cosens wrongs'
in Shakespeare's R 2 II. 3. 141, but 'your foule wrongs'
(in the same play, III. 1. 15) means the wrongs com-
mitted by you. In 'my sceptre's awe' (ib. I. 1. 118) we
have an objective, but in 'thy free awe pays homage
to us' (Hamlet IV. 3. 63) a subjective genitive. But
on the whole such obscurity will occur less frequently
in English than in other languages, where the genitive
is more freely used.

193. Now, *of* has so far prevailed that there are very
few cases where a genitive cannot be replaced by it,
and it is even used to supplant a possessive pronoun in
such stock phrases as 'not for the death of me' (cf.
Chaucer's 'the blood of me', LGW. 848). *Of* is required
in a great many cases, such as 'I come here at the
instance of your colleague, Dr. H. J. Henry Jekyll'
(Stevenson), and it is often employed to avoid tacking
on the *s* to too long a series of words, as in 'Will
Wimble's is the case of many a younger brother of a
great family' (Addison) or 'the wife of a clergyman of
the Church of England' (Thackeray), where most Eng-
lishmen will resent the iteration of *of*'s less than they

do the repeated *s*'es in Mrs. Browning's 'all the hoofs Of King Saul's father's asses' or in Pinero's 'He is my wife's first husband's only child's godfather.' Even long strings of prepositions are tolerated, as in 'on the occasion of the coming of age of one of the youngest sons of a wealthy member of Parliament', or 'Swift's visit to London in 1707 had for its object the obtaining for the Irish Church of the surrender by the Crown of the First-Fruits and Twentieths' (Aitken) or 'that sublime conception of the Holy Father of a spiritual kingdom on earth under the sovereignty of the Vicar of Jesus Christ himself' (Hall Caine). I suppose that very few readers of the original books have found anything heavy or cumbersome in these passages, even if they may here, where their attention is drawn to the grammatical construction.

194. Speaking of the genitive, we ought also to mention the curious use in phrases like 'a friend of my brother's'. This began in the fourteenth century with such instances as 'an officere of the prefectes' (Chaucer G 868), where *officers* might be supplied (=one of the prefect's officers) and 'if that any neighebor of mine (= any of my neighbours) Wol nat in chirche to my wyf enclyne' (id. B 3091). In the course of a few centuries, the construction became more and more frequent, so that it has now long been one of the fixtures of the English language. A partitive sense is still conceivable in such phrases as 'an olde religious unckle of mine' (Sh., As III. 3. 362) = one of my uncles, though it will be seen that it is impossible to analyze it as being equal to 'one of my old religious uncles'. But it is not at all certain that *of* here from the first was partitive[1]; it is rather to be classed with the appositional use in *the three of us* = 'the three who are we'; *the City of Rome* = 'the City which is Rome'. The construction is used chiefly to avoid the juxtaposition of two pronouns, 'this hat of mine, that ring of yours' being preferred to 'this my hat,

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1 See *Mod. Engl. Grammar* III p. 15 ff.

that your ring', or of a pronoun and a genitive, as in
'any ring of Jane's', where 'any Jane's ring' or 'Jane's
any ring' would be impossible; compare also 'I make it
a rule of mine', 'this is no fault of Frank's', etc. In all
such cases the construction was found so convenient
that it is no wonder that it should soon be used ex-
tensively where no partitive sense is logically possible,
as in 'nor shall [we] ever see That face of hers againe'
(Shakespeare, Lear I. 1. 267), 'that flattering tongue
of yours' (As IV. 1. 188), 'Time hath not yet so dried
this bloud of mine' (Ado IV. 1. 195), 'If I had such a
tyre, this face of mine Were full as lovely as is this of
hers' (Gent. IV. 4. 190), 'this uneasy heart of ours'
(Wordsworth), 'that poor old mother of his', etc. When
we now say, 'he has a house of his own', no one could
think of this as meaning 'he has one of his own
houses'.

195. In the *nominative plural* the Old English de-
clensions present the same motley spectacle as the
genitive singular. Most masculines have the ending *as*,
but some have *e* (Engle, etc.), some *a* (suna, etc.) and
a great many *an* (guman, etc.); some nouns have no
ending at all, and most of these change the vowel of
the kernel (fet, etc.), while a few have the plural
exactly like the singular (hettend). Feminine words
formed their plural in *a* (giefa), in *e* (bene), in *an* (tun-
gan) or without any ending (sweostor; with mutation
bec). Neuters had either no ending (word) or else *u*
(hofu) or *an* (eagan). From the oldest period the
ending *as* (later *es, s*) has been continually gaining
ground, first among those masculines that belonged
to other declensional classes, later on also in the other
genders. The *an*-ending, which was common to a very
great number of substantives from the very begin-
ning, also showed great powers of expansion and at
one time seemed as likely as *(e)s* to become the uni-
versal plural ending. But finally *(e)s* carried the day,
probably because it was the most distinctive ending,
and possibly under Scandinavian influence (§ 79). In

the beginning of the modern period *eyen, shoon,* and *hosen, housen, peasen* still existed, but they were doomed to destruction, and now *oxen* is the only real plural in *n* surviving, for *children* as well as the biblical *kine* and *brethren* are too irregular to count as plurals made by the addition of *n.* The mutation plural has survived in some words whose signification causes the plural to occur more frequently than, or at least as frequently as, the singular: *geese, teeth, feet, mice, lice, men* and *women.* In all other words the analogy of the plurals in *s* was too strong for the old form to be preserved.

196. Instead of the ending *-ses* we often find a single *s*; in some cases this may be the continued use of the French plural form without any ending (*cas* sg. and pl.), as in *sense* (their sense are shut, Sh.), *corpse* (pl. Sh.) etc. In Coriolanus III. 1. 118 *voyce* and *voyces* occur, both of them to be read as one syllable: 'Why shall the people give One that speakes thus, their voyce?—Ile give my reasons, More worthier than their voyces. They know the corne.' But when Shakespeare uses *princesse* and *balance* as plurals (Tp. I. 2. 173; Merch. IV. 1. 255), the forms admit of no other explanation than that of haplology (pronouncing the same sound once instead of twice). Thus also in the genitive case: 'his mistresse eye-brow' (As II. 7. 149), 'your Highness' pleasure', etc. Now it is more usual to give the full form *mistress's,* etc., yet in *Pears' soap* the juxtaposition of three *s*'es is avoided by means of the apostrophized form. The genitive of the plural is now always haplologized: 'the Poets' Corner', except in some dialects: 'other folks's children' (George Eliot), 'the bairns's clease' (Murray, Dial. of Scotl. 164). Wallis (1653) expressly states that the gen. pl. in *the Lords' House* (by him written *Lord's*) stands instead of *the Lords's House* (duo *s* in unum coincidunt). A phenomenon of the same order is the omission of the genitive sign before a word beginning with *s,* now chiefly before *sake*: for fashion sake, etc.

197. Sometimes an *s* belonging to the stem of the word is taken by the popular instinct to be a plural ending.[1] Thus in *alms*, (ME. *almesse, elmesse*, pl. *almesses*; OE. *ælmesse* from Gr. *eleemosune*); it is significant that the word is very often found in connexions where it is impossible from the context to discover whether a singular or a plural is intended (ask alms, give alms, etc.). In the Authorized Version the word occurs eleven times, but eight of these are ambiguous, two are clearly singular (asked an almes, gave much almes) and one is probably plural (Thy praiers and thine almes are come up). Nowadays the association between the *s* of the *alms* and the plural ending has become so firm that *an alms* is said and written very rarely indeed, though it is found in Tennyson's Enoch Arden. *Riches* is another case in point; Chaucer still lays the stress on the second syllable (*richésse* as in French) and uses the plural *richesses*; but as subsequently the final *e* disappeared, and as the word occurred very often in such a way that the context does not show its number ('Thou bearst thy heavie riches but a journie', Sh. Meas. III. 1. 27; thus in fourteen out of the 24 places where Shakespeare uses it), it is no wonder that the form was generally conceived as a plural, thus 'riches are a power' (Ruskin). The singular use (the riches of the ship is come on shore, Sh. Oth. II. 1. 83, too much riches, R 2 III. 4. 60) is now wholly obsolete.

198. A further step is taken in those words that lose the *s* originally belonging to their stem, because it is mistakenly apprehended as the sign of plural.[2] Latin *pisum* became in OE. *pise*, in ME. *pese*, pl. *pesen*; Butler (1633) still gives *peas* as sg. and *peasen* as pl., but he adds, 'the singular is most used for the plural: as .. a peck of peas; though the Londoners seem to make it a regular plural, calling a *peas* a *pea*'. In compounds like *peaseblossom, peaseporridge* and

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1 Cf. Mod. Engl. Grammar II ch. V.
2 Cf. the other back-formations mentioned above, § 183.

pease-soup (Swift, Lamb) the old form was preserved long after *pea* had become the recognized singular. Similarly *a cherry* was evolved from a form in *s* (French *cerise*), *a riddle* from *riddles; an eaves* (OE. *efes,* cf. Got. *ubizwa,* ON. *ups*) is often made *an eave,* and vulgarly *a pony shay* is said for *chaise;* compare also Bret Harte's 'heathen *Chinee*' and the parallel forms *a Portuguee, a Maltee.* An interesting case in point is *Yankee,* if H Logeman's ingenious explanation is to be accepted. The term was originally applied to the inhabitants of the Dutch colonies in North America (New Amsterdam, now New York, etc.). Now *Jan Kees* is a nickname still applied in Flanders to people from Holland proper. *Jan* of course is the common Dutch name corresponding to English John, and *Kees* may be either the usual pet-form of the name Cornelis, another Christian name typical of the Dutch, or else a dialectal variation of *kaas* 'cheese' in allusion to that typically Dutch product, or — what is most probable — a combination of both *Jankees* in English became *Yankees,* where the *s* was taken as the plural ending and eventually disappeared, and *Yankee* became the designation of any inhabitant of New England and even sometimes of the whole of the United States.

199. We have a different class of back-formations in those cases in which the *s* that is subtracted is really the plural ending, while one part of the word is retained which is logically consistent with the plural idea only. It is easily conceivable that most people ignorant of the fact that the first syllable of *cinque-ports* means 'five', have no hesitation in speaking of Hastings as a *cinque-port;* but it is more difficult to see how the signification of the numeral in *ninepins* should be forgotten, and yet sometimes each of the 'pins' used in that play is called *a ninepin,* and Gosse writes 'the author sets up his four ninepins'.

200. In some words the *s* of the plural has become fixed, as if it belonged to the singular, thus in *means.* As is shown by the pun in Shakespeare's Romeo 'no

sudden meane of death, though nere so meane' the old
form was still understood in his time, but the modern
form too is used by him (*by that meanes*, Merch.; *a
means*, Wint.). Similarly: *too much pains, an honour-
able amends, a shambles, an innings*, etc., sometimes
a scissors, a tweezers, a barracks, a golf links, etc., where
the logical idea of a single action or thing has proved
stronger than the original grammar.

201. It is not, however, till a new plural has been
formed on such a form that the transformation from
plural to singular has been completed. This phenomenon,
which might be termed plural raised to the second
power, will naturally occur with greater facility when
the original singular is not in use or when the manner of
forming the plural is no longer perspicuous. Thus OE. *broc*
formed its plural *brec* (cf *gos ges* goose geese), but *broc*
became obsolete, and *brec, breech* was free to become
a singular and to form a new plural *breeches*. Similarly
invoices, quinces, bodices and a few others have a double
plural ending; but then the unusual sound of the first
ending (voiceless *s*, where the ordinary ending is
voiced, as in *joys, sins*) facilitated the forgetting of the
original function of the *s* (written -*ce*). *Bodice* is really
nothing but a by-form of *bodies*. The old pronunciation
of *bellows* and *gallows* had also a voiceless *s*, which
helps to explain the vulgar plurals *bellowses* and
gallowses. But in the occasional plural *mewses* (from
a mews, orig. *a muc*) the new ending has been added
in spite of the first *s* being voiced. These plurals raised
to the second power, to which must be added *sixpences,
threepences*, etc., are particularly interesting because
there really are cases where the want is felt of ex-
pressing the plural of something which is in itself plural,
either formally or logically; cf. *many (pairs of)
scissors*. Generally one plural ending only is used[1],
but occasionally the logically correct double ending is
resorted to, especially among uneducated people;

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1 'Then ensued one of the most lively ten minutes that I can
remember' (Conan Doyle), plural of 'a lively ten minutes'.

Thackeray makes his flunkey write: 'there was 8 sets
of chamberses' (Yellowplush Papers, p. 39), and a
London schoolboy[1] once wrote: 'cats have clawses'
(one cat has claws!) and again 'cats have 9 liveses'
(each cat has nine lives!) Dr. Murray[2] mentions a
double plural sometimes formed in Scotch dialect
from such words as *schuin* (one person's shoes), *feit*
'feet' and *kye* 'cows', *schuins* meaning more than one
pair of shoes, and he ingeniously suggests that this
may illustrate such plurals as *children, brethren, kine;*
the original plurals were *childer, brether, ky* (still
preserved in the northern dialect), which may have
'come to be used collectively for the offspring or
members of a single family, the herd of a single owner,
so that a second plural inflection became necessary to
express the *brethren* and *children* of many families, the
ky-en of many owners ... In modern English we
restrict *brothers*, which replaces *brether*, to those of one
family, using *brethren* for those who call each other
brother, though of different families.'

202. Most of the words that make their plural like
the singular are old neuters, the *s*-ending belonging
originally to masculines only and having only grad-
ually been extended to the other two genders; thus
swine, deer, sheep. In some cases a difference sprang
up between the singular in speaking of the mass and
an individual plural (in *-s*), as seen most clearly in
Shakespeare's 'Shee hath more *haire* then wit, and
more faults then *hairs*' (Gent III. 1. 362) and Milton's
'which thou from Heaven Feigndst at thy birth was
giv'n thee in thy *hair*, Where strength can least abide,
though all thy *hairs* Were bristles' (Sams. Ag. 1186).
This difference was transferred to some old masculines,
like *fish, fowl;* and a great many names of particular
fishes and birds, especially those generally hunted and
used for food, are now often unchanged in the plural
(*snipe, plover, trout, salmon*, etc.), though with a great deal

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1 *Very Original English* by Barker (London 1889), p. 71.
2 *Dialect of the Southern Counties of Scotland* (London 1873) p.161.

of vacillation. It is also noticeable that *much fruit* =
many fruits and *much coal* = *many coals*. When we
say 'four *hundred* men', but '*hundreds* of men', 'two
dozen collars', but '*dozens* of collars' and similarly with
couple, pair, score and some other words, we have
an approach to the rule prevailing in many languages,
e. g. Magyar, where the plural ending is not added after
a numeral, because that suffices in itself to show that a
plural is intended.[1]

203. (II). Disappearance of the old *word-gender*.[2] In
Old English, as in all the old cognate languages, each
substantive, no matter whether it referred to animate
beings or things or abstract notions, belonged to one or
other of the three gender-classes. Thus masculine
pronouns and endings were found with names of a
great many things which had nothing to do with male
sex (e. g. *horn, ende* 'end', *ebba* 'ebb', *dæg*, 'day') and
similarly feminine pronouns and endings with many
words without any relation to female sex (e. g. *sorh*
'sorrow', *glof* 'glove', *plume* 'plum', *pipe*). Anyone
acquainted with the intricacies of the same system
(or want of system) in German will feel how much
English has gained in clearness and simplicity by giving
up these distinctions and applying *he* only to male, and
she only to female, living beings. The distinction
between animate and inanimate now is much more
accentuated than it used to be, and this has led to
some other changes, of which the two most important
are the creation (about 1600) of the form *its* (before
that time *his* was neuter as well as masculine) and the
restriction of the relative pronoun *which* to things: its
old use alike for persons and things is seen in 'Our
father *which* art in Heaven'.

204. (III. *Numerals*). While the cardinal numerals
show very little change during the whole life of the

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1 Cf. *Mod. Engl. Gr.* II ch. III Unchanged plurals, and ch. V
Mass-words.

2 On the relation between gender and sex see *Philosophy of
Grammar* ch. XVII.

language, except what is a consequence of ordinary phonetic development[1], the ordinals have been much more changed so that their formation is now completely regular, with the exception of the first three. *First* has ousted the old *forma* (corresponding to Latin *primus*), and the French *second* has been called in to relieve *other* of one of its significations, so that a useful distinction has been created between the definite and the indefinite numeral. As for the numbers from 4 upwards, the regularization has affected both the stem and the ending of the numeral In Old English the *n* had disappeared from *seofoða, nigoða* and *teoða (feower-teoða,* etc.), but now it has been analogically reintroduced: *seventh, ninth, tenth (fourteenth,* etc.), the only survival of the older forms being *tithe,* which is now a substantive differentiated from the numeral, as seen particularly clearly in the phrase 'a tenth part of the tithe' (Auth. Version, Num. 18. 26). In *twelfth* and *fifth* we have the insignificant anomaly of *f* (which in the former is often mute) instead of *v*, and the consonant-group in the latter has shortened the vowel, but elsewhere there is complete correspondence between each cardinal and its ordinal. As for the ending, it used according to a well-known phonetic rule to be *-ta* (later *-te, -t*) after voiceless open consonants, thus *fifta, fift, sixta sixt, twelfta twelft;* and these are still the only forms in Shakespeare (Henry the Fift, etc.)[2] and Milton. The regular forms in *th* evidently were used in writing before they became prevalent in speaking, for Schade in 1765 laid down the rule that *th* was to be pronounced *t* in *twelfth* and *fifth*. *Eighth,* which would

1 Note that in Old and Middle English the cardinals had an *-e* when used absolutely (*fif* men, they were *five*), and that it is this form that has prevailed. If the old conjoint form had survived, *five* and *twelve* would have ended in *f*, and *seven, nine,* and *eleven* would have had no *-n*

2 *Twelfth Night* is in the folio of 1623 called *Twelfe Night* and similarly we have *twelfe day*, where the middle consonant of a difficult group has been discarded, just as in *the thousand part* (As IV. 1. 46)

be more adequately written *eightth*, is also a modern
form; the old editions of Shakespeare have *eight*. The
formation in *-th*, which is now beautifully regular,
has also been extended in recent times to a few sub-
stantives: *the hundredth, thousandth, millionth,* and
dozenth.

205. (IV). The *pronominal system* has been reinforced
by some new applications of old material. *Who* and
which, originally interrogative and indefinite pronouns,
are now used also as relatives. *Self* has entered into
the compounds *myself, himself*, etc., and has developed
a plural, *ourselves, themselves*, which was new in the
beginning of the sixteenth century. With regard to
the use of these *self*-forms it may be remarked that
their frequency first increased and then in certain
cases decreased again: *he dressed him* became *he dressed
himself*, and this is now giving way to *he dressed. One*
has come to serve several purposes; as an indefinite
pronoun (in 'one never can tell') it dates from the
fifteenth century, and as a prop-word ('a little one',
'the little ones') the modern usage goes no further back
than to the sixteenth century.

206. (V). The history of the forms in *ing* is certainly
one of the most interesting examples of the growth
from a very small beginning of something very im-
portant in the economy of the language. The 'ing',
as I shall for shortness call the form with that ending,
began as a pure substantive[1], restricted as to the
number of words from which it might be formed and
restricted as to its syntactical functions. It seems to
have been originally possible to form it only from
nouns, cf. modern words like *schooling, shirting,
stabling;* as some of the nouns from which ings were
derived, had corresponding weak verbs, the ings came
to be looked upon as derived from these verbs, and
new ings were made from other weak verbs. (Also
from French verbs, cf. above § 106). But it was a long

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1 The Old English ending was *ung* as well as *ing*.

time before ings were made from strong verbs; a few
occur in the very last decades of the Old English period,
but most of them did not creep into existence till the
twelfth or thirteenth century or even later, and it is
not, perhaps, till the beginning of the fifteenth century
that the formation had taken such a firm root in the
language that an ing could be formed unhesitatingly
from any verb whatever (apart from the auxiliaries
can, may, shall, must, etc., which have no ings).

207. With regard to its syntactical use the old ing
was a substantive and was restricted to the functions
it shared with all other substantives. While keeping
all its substantival qualities, it has since gradually
acquired most of the functions belonging to a verb.
It was, and is, inflected like a substantive; now the
genitive case is rare and scarcely occurs outside of
such phrases as 'reading for reading's sake'; but the
plural is common: his comings and goings; feelings,
drawings, leavings, weddings, etc. Like any other
substantive it can have the definite or indefinite
article and an adjective before it: a beginning, the
beginning, a good beginning, etc., so also a genitive:
Tom's savings. It can enter into a compound noun
either as the first or as the second part: a walking-
stick; sight-seeing. The ing can be used in a sentence
in every position occupied by an ordinary substantive.
It is the subject and the predicative nominative in
'complimenting is lying', the object in 'I hate lying';
it is governed by an adjective in 'worth knowing', and
governed by a preposition in 'before answering', etc.
But we shall now see how several of the peculiar
functions of verbs are extended to the ing. The coales-
cence in form of the verbal substantive and of the
present participle is, of course, one of the chief factors
of this development.

208. When the ing was a pure substantive the *object*
of the action it indicated could be expressed in one
of three ways: it might be put in the genitive case
('sio feding þara sceapa', the feeding of the sheep,

Alfred), or it might form the first part of a compound (blood-letting) or — the usual construction in Middle English — it might be added after *of* (in magnifying of his name, Chaucer). The first of these constructions has died out; the last is in our days especially frequent after the article (since the telling of those little fibs, Thackeray). But from the fourteenth century we find a growing tendency to treat the ing like a form of the verb and, accordingly, to put the object in the accusative case. Chaucer's words 'in getinge of your richesses and in usinge hem' (B 2813) show both constructions in juxtaposition; so also 'Thou art so fat-witted with drinking of olde sacke, and unbuttoning thee after supper' (Henry IV, A. I. 2. 2). Chaucer's 'In liftinge up his hevy dronken cors' (H 67) shows a double deviation from the old substantival construction, for an ordinary substantive cannot in this way be *followed by an adverb*, and in the old language the adverb was joined to the ing in a different way (up-lifting, in-coming, down-going). In course of time it became more and more usual to join any kind of adverb to the ing, e. g. 'a man shal not wyth *ones* [once] over redyng fynde the ryght understandyng' (Caxton), 'he proposed our *immediately* drinking a bottle together' (Fielding), 'nothing distinguishes great men from inferior men more than their *always*, whether in life or in art, knowing the ways things are going' (Ruskin).

209. A substantive does not admit of any indication of *time; his movement* may correspond in meaning to 'he moves (is moving)', 'he moved (was moving)', or 'he will move'. Similarly the ing had originally, and to a great extent still has, no reference to time: 'on account of his coming' may be equal to 'because he comes' or 'because he came' or 'he will come', according to the connexion in which it occurs. 'I intend seeing the king' refers to the future, 'I remember seeing the king' to the past, or rather the ing as such implies neither of these tenses. But since the end of the sixteenth century the ing has still further approxi-

mated to the character of a verb by developing a
composite perfect. Shakespeare, who uses the new
tense in a few places, e. g. Gent. I. 3. 16 ('To let him
spend his time no more at home; Which would be great
impeachment to his age, In *having knowne* no travaile
in his youth') does not always use it where it would be
used now; for in 'Give order to my servants that they
take No note at all of our *being* absent hence' *being*
corresponds in meaning to *having been*, as shown by
the context (Merch. of Ven. V. 120). — Like other
nouns the ing was also at first incapable of expressing
the verbal distinction between *the active and the passive
voice*. The simple ing is still often neutral in this
respect, and in some connexions assumes a passive
meaning, as in 'it wants mending', 'the story lost much
in the telling'. This is extremely frequent in old
authors, e. g. 'Use everie man after his desart, and
who should scape whipping' (Hamlet II. 2. 554),
'Shall we ... excuse his throwing into the water?'
(Wiv. III. 3. 206 = his being, or having been, thrown),
'An instrument of this your calling backe' (Oth. IV.
2. 45). But about 1600 a new form came into existence,
as the old one would often appear ambiguous, and it
was felt convenient to be able to distinguish between
'foxes enjoy hunting' and 'foxes enjoy being hunted'.
The new passive is rare in Shakespeare ('I spoke ... of
being taken by the insolent foe', Oth. I. 3. 136), but has
now for a long time been firmly established in the
language.

210. Still another step must be mentioned in this
long development of a form at first purely substan-
tival into one partly substantival and partly verbal
in function. The *subject* of the ing, like that of any
verbal noun (for instance *Cæsar's* conquests, *Pope's*
imitations of Horace), is for the most part put in the
genitive case — nearly always when it is a personal pro-
noun (in spite of *his* saying so), and generally when it
indicates a person (in spite of *John's* saying so). But a
variety of circumstances led to the use in many instances

of the common case before the ing.[1] Here I must content
myself with quoting a few instances of the new con-
struction: 'When we talk of this man or that woman
being no longer the same person' (Thackeray), 'besides
the fact of those three being there, the drawbridge
is kept up' (A. Hope), 'When I think of this being the
last time of seeing you' (Miss Austen), 'the possibility
of such an effect being wrought by such a cause'
(Dickens), 'he insisted upon the Chamber carrying out
his policy' (Lecky), 'I have not the least objection in
life to a rogue being hung' (Thackeray; here evidently
no participle), 'no man ever heard of opium leading
into delirium tremens' (De Quincey), 'the suffering
arises simply from people not understanding this
truism' (Ruskin). These examples will show that the
construction is especially useful in those cases where
for some reason or other it is impossible to use the
genitive case, but that it is also found where no such
reason could be adduced. — Let me sum up by saying
that when an Englishman now says, 'There is some
probability of the place having never been inspected
by the police', he deviates in four points from the con-
structions of the ing that would have been possible
to one of his ancestors six hundred years ago: *place*
is in the crude form, not in the genitive; the adverb;
the perfect; and the passive. Thanks to these extensions
the ing has clearly become a most valuable means of
expressing tersely and neatly relations that must else
have been indicated by clumsy dependent clauses.

211. (VI). We proceed to the *verbal ending -s* (*he
loves*, etc.). In Old English *-th* (þ) was used in the
ending of the third person singular and in all persons
in the plural of the present indicative, but the vowel
before it varied, so that we have for instance: —

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1 See *Society for Pure English*, Tract XXV (1926), p. 147 ff.
(against H W Fowler's view of 'Fused Participles'). Van der Ganf,
in *Engl. Studies* X (1928) is probably wrong in attributing the con-
struction to imitation of Old French.

infinitive	3rd *sg.*	*pl.*
sprecan	spricþ	sprecaþ
bindan	bindeþ, bint	bindaþ
nerian	nereþ	neriaþ
lufian	lufaþ	lufiaþ.

But in the Northumbrian dialect of the tenth century *s* was substituted for þ (singular *bindes*, plural *bindas*), and as all unstressed vowels were soon after levelled, the two forms became identical (*bindes*). As in the same dialect the second person singular too ended in *s* (as against the *-st* of the South), all persons sounded alike except the first singular. But the development was not to stop there. In Old English a difference is made in the plural, according as the verb precedes *we* or *ge* ('ye') or not (*binde we, binde ge, but we bindaþ, ge bindaþ*). This is the germ of the more radical difference now carried through consistently in the Scotch dialect, where the *s* is only added when the verb is not accompanied by its proper pronoun, — but in that case it is used in all persons. Murray gives the following sentences among others[1]:

aa *cum* fyrst — yt's mey at *cums* fyrst.
wey *gang* theare — huz tweae quheyles *gangs* theare.
they *cum* an' *teake* them — the burds *cums* an' *pæcks* them. (I come first; it is I that come first; we go there; we two sometimes go there; they come and take them; the birds come and pick them.)

In the other parts of the country the development was different. In the Midland dialect the *-en* of the subjunctive and of the preterit was transferred to the present of the indicative, so that we have the following forms in the standard language: —

14th century	16th century
I falle	I fall
he falleth	he fall(e)th
we fallen (falle)	we fall.

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1 *Dial. of the Southern Counties of Scotland*, 1878, p. 212, where quotations from the earlier literature are also given.

This is the only dialect in which the third person
singular is kept clearly distinct from the other
persons.

In the South of England, finally, the *th* was preserved
in the plural, and was even extended to the first person
singular. Old people in the hilly parts of Somersetshire
and Devonshire still say not only [i wɔ·kþ] 'he walks',
but also [ðei zeþ, ai zeþ] 'they say, I say'. In most
cases, however, *do* is used, which is made [də] without
any *th* through the whole singular as well as plural.[1]

212. But the northern *s*'es wandered southward.
Three solitary examples are found in Chaucer for the
sake of the rime.[2] A century later Caxton used the
th-ending (eth, ith, yth) exclusively, and this remained
the usual form in writing till the 16th century, when
s began to be used in poetry. In Marlowe *s* is by far
the commoner ending, except after hissing conso-
nants (passeth, opposeth, pitcheth, presageth, etc.,
Tamburlaine 68, 845, 1415, 1622). Spenser prefers *s*
in poetry. In the first four cantos of the *Faerie Queene*
I have counted 94 *s*'es as against 24 *th*'s (besides 8 *has*,
18 *hath*, 15 *does*, and 31 *doth*.) But in his prose *th*
predominates even much more than *s* does in his poetry.
In the introductory letter to Sir W. Raleigh there is
only one *s* (it needs), but many *th*'s; and in his book
on 'the Present State of Ireland' all the third persons
singular end in *th*, except a small number of phrases
(*me seems*, several times, but *it seemeth; what boots it;
how comes it*, and perhaps a few more) that seem to be
characteristic of a more colloquial tone than the rest
of the book   Shakespeare's practice is not easy to
ascertain. In a great many passages the folio of 1623
has *th* where the earlier quartos have *s*. In the prose

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1 Elworthy, *Grammar of the Dialect of West Somerset* p. 191 ff.
2 *Telles· elles* Duch. 73, Fame 426; *falles: halles* Duch. 257. In
the Reves Tale the *s*-forms are used to characterize the North of
England dialect of the two students (*gas* for Chaucer's ordinary
gooth, etc.).

parts of his dramas *s* prevails[1], and the rule may be
laid down that *th* belongs more to the solemn or digni-
fied speeches than to everyday talk, although this is
by no means carried through everywhere. In Mac-
beth I. 7. 29 ff. Lady Macbeth is more matter-of-fact
than her husband (Lady: He *has* almost supt ... Macb.:
Hath he ask'd for me? Lady: Know you not he *ha's*.
Macb. .... He *hath* honour'd me of late ....), but
when his more solemn mood seizes her, she too puts
on the buskin (Was the hope drunke, Wherein you
drest your selfe? *Hath* it slept since?). — Where
Mercutio mocks Romeo's love-sickness (II. 1. 15), he
has the line: He *heareth* not, he *stirreth* not, he *moveth*
not, but in his famous description of Queen Mab
(I. 4. 53 ff.) he has 18 verbs in *s* and only two in *th*,
hath and *driveth*, of which the latter is used for the
sake of the metre.

213. Contemporary prose, at any rate in its higher
forms, has generally *th*; the *s*-ending is not at all found
in the Authorized Version of 1611, nor in Bacon's
Atlantis (though in his *Essays* there are some *s*'es).
The conclusion with regard to Elizabethan usage as
a whole seems to be that the form in *s* was a collo-
quialism and as such was allowed in poetry and
especially in the drama. This *s* must, however, be
considered a licence wherever it occurs in the higher
literature of that period. But in the first half of the
seventeenth century *s* must have been the ending
universally used in ordinary conversation, and we
have evidence that it was even usual to read *s* where
the book had *th*, for Richard Hodges (1643) gives in
his list of words pronounced alike though spelt differ-
ently among others *boughs boweth bowze; clause claweth
claws; courses courseth corpses; choose cheweth*[2], and in

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1 Franz, *Shakespeare-Grammatik*, 3rd ed p. 151: In Much Ado
(Q 1600) *th* is not found at all in the prose parts and only twice in
the poetical parts; the Merry Wives, which is chiefly in prose, has
only one *th*.

2 See Ellis, *Early English Pronunciation*, IV, 1018.

1649 he says 'howsoever wee write them thus, leadeth it, maketh it, noteth it, we say lead's it, make's it, note's it'. The only exceptions seem to have been *hath* and *doth*, where the frequency of occurrence protected the old forms from being modified analogically[1], so that they were prevalent till about the middle of the eighteenth century. Milton, with the exceptions just mentioned, always writes *s* in his prose as well as in his poetry, and so does Pope. No difference was then felt to be necessary between even the most elevated poetry and ordinary conversation in that respect. But it is well worth noting that Swift, in the Introduction to his 'Polite Conversation', where he affects a quasi-scientific tone, writes *hath* and *doth*, while in the conversations themselves *has* and *does* are the forms constantly used.[2]

214. At church, however, people went on hearing the *th*-forms, although even there the *s*'es began to creep in.[3] And it must certainly be ascribed to influence from biblical language that the *th*-forms again began to be used by poets towards the end of the eighteenth century; at first apparently this was done rather sparingly, but nineteenth century poets employ *th* to a greater extent. This revival of the old form affords the advantage from the poet's point of view of adding at discretion a syllable, as in Wordsworth's

> In gratitude to God, Who *feeds* our hearts
> For His own service; *knoweth, loveth* us (Prelude 13. 276)

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1 This applies, partially at least, to *saith* as well.

2 In the *Journal to Stella* all verbs have *s*, except *hath*, which is, however, less frequent than *has*. Further details on *th* and *s* in E. Holmqvist, *History of the Engl. Pres. Inflections* (Heidelberg 1922) and H C Wyld, *A History of Mod. Colloquial English* (2nd ed , London 1936), p 332ff Wyld may be right in thinking that the extremely common auxiliary *is* contributed to the popularity of the *s*-ending.

3 See the Spectator, no. 147 (Morley's ed. p. 217) 'a set of readers [of prayers at church] who affect, forsooth, a certain gentleman-like familiarity of tone, and mend the language as they go on, crying instead of pardoneth and absolveth, pardons and absolves'.

or in Byron's

> Whate'er she *loveth*, so she *loves* thee not,
> What can it profit thee? (Heaven and Earth I sc. 2).

Sometimes the *th*-form comes more handy for the rime (as when *saith* rimes with *death*), and sometimes the following sound may have induced a poet to prefer one or the other ending, as in

> . . .   . Coleridge *hath the* sway,
> And Wordsworth *has supporters*, two or three,[1]

but in a great many cases individual fancy only decides which form is chosen. In prose, too, the *th*-form begins to make its re-appearance in the nineteenth century, not only in biblical quotations, etc., but often with the sole view of imparting a more solemn tone to the style, as in Thackeray's 'Not always *doth* the writer know whither the divine Muse *leadeth* him'.

215. The nineteenth century has even gone so far as to create a double-form in one verb, making a distinction between *doth* [pronounced dʌþ] as an auxiliary verb and *doeth* [pronounced duˑiþ] as an independent one. The early printers used the two forms indiscriminately, or rather preferred *doth* where *doeth* would make the line appear too closely packed, and *doeth* where there was room enough. Thus in the Authorized Version of 1611 we find 'a henne *doeth* gather her brood under her wings' (Luke XIII. 34) and 'he that *doth* the will of my father' (Matth. VII. 21), where recent use would have reversed the order of the forms, but in 'whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and *doeth* them' (Matth. VII. 24) the old printer happens to be in accordance with the rule of our own days. When the *th*-form was really living, *doeth* was certainly always pronounced in one syllable (thus in Shakespeare). I give a few examples of the modern differentiation.[2] J. R. Lowell

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1 *Don Juan* XI. 69.

2 Which has not been noticed in N.E.D., though it mentions the corresponding difference between *dost* and *doest* as 'in late use'.

writes (My Love, Poems 1849, I 129 = Poetical Works
in one volume p. 6) 'She *doeth* little kindnesses ...
Her life *doth* rightly harmonize ... And yet *doth* ever
flow aright.' Rider Haggard has both forms in the
same sentence (She 199) 'Man *doeth* this and *doeth*
that, but he knows not to what ends his sense *doth*
prompt him'; cf. also Tennyson's *The Captain*: 'He
that only rules by terror, *Doeth* grievous wrong.'

216. To sum up. If the *s* of the third person singular
comes from the North, this is true of the outer form
only; the 'inner form', to use the expression of some
philologists, is the Midland one, that is to say, *s* is used
in those cases only where the Midland dialects had *th*,
and is not extended according to the northern rules.
In vulgar English *s* is used in the first person singular:
I wishes; says I, etc., as in Rehearsal (1671): 'I makes
'em both speak fresh' (Arber's reprint, p. 53). But it
will be seen that this is in direct opposition to the
northern usage where the *s* is never found by the side
of the personal pronoun.

217. (VII). A notable feature of the history of the
English language is the building up of a rich system
of *tenses*[1] on the basis of the few possessed by Old
English, where the present was also a sort of vague
future, and where the simple preterit was often em-
ployed as a kind of pluperfect, especially when sup-
ported by *ær*, 'ere, before'. The use of *have* and *had* as
an auxiliary for the perfect and pluperfect began in the
Old English period, but it was then chiefly found with
transitive verbs, and the real perfect-signification had
scarcely yet been completely evolved from the original
meaning of the connexion: *ic hæbbe þone fisc gefangenne*
meant at first 'I *have* the fish (as) caught' (note the
accusative ending in the participle). By and by a
distinction was made between 'I had mended the
table' and 'I had the table mended', 'he had left

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1 See my *Modern Engl Gr.*, vol. IV, especially chs. 12—14 (Ex-
panded tenses) and 15—21 (will, shall, would, should), *Philosophy
of Grammar*, chs. 19 and 20, *Essentials of Engl. Gr*, chs. 23—25.

nothing' and 'he had nothing left'. In Middle English *have* came to be used extensively in the perfect of intransitive verbs as well as transitive; *I have been* does not seem to occur earlier than 1200. With such verbs as *go* and *come, I am* was usual in the perfect for several centuries, where now *I have gone* and *I have come* (*returned,* etc.) are the ordinary expressions. The verbs *will* and *shall* have in many contexts come to be auxiliaries serving to express pure futurity, the original meaning of volition and obligation being more or less effaced; but owing partly to the fact that to express the three distinct ideas of obligation, volition, and simple futurity we have only those two verbs as against German *sollen, wollen* und *werden,* the actual rules for the employment of the two verbs are somewhat complicated, and where strict grammarians require *shall* (I shall, shall you; he thinks that he shall die, he = shifted first person), the verb *will* (and the shortened form 'll) is now more and more used, even in the South of England. In Scotland, Ireland, and North America, *will* has long been almost exclusively used as auxiliary. The present rules may be stated roughly thus: To indicate pure, colourless future *will* is used everywhere, except in those cases in which it might be misunderstood as implying actual will. Often the unambiguous *is going to* is used, and in many cases the simple present suffices: *I start to-morrow if it is fine.* To express obligation or necessity we have the unambiguous expressions *must, has to,* and to express volition *want, intend, mean, choose* are often preferred where *will* was formerly used. — The expanded tenses *I am reading, I was reading, I have been reading, I shall be reading,* were not fully developed even in Shakespeare's time; the distinction between the simple and the expanded tenses is now a wonderful means of expressing temporal and emotional nuances.[1] The passive construction *(the house is being built)* is an

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1 The latest and best treatment of the expanded forms is F. Mossé, *Histoire de la Forme Périphrastique être + participe présent* II (Paris 1938).

innovation dating from the very end of the eighteenth century.[1] Before that time the phrase was *the house is building*, i. e. *a-building* 'is in construction', and the new phrase had to fight its way against much violent opposition in the nineteenth century before it was universally recognized as good English. Macaulay used it inadvertently a few times in letters in his youth, but avoided it in his books. A still more recent innovation is the use of *is being* before an adjective: After all, he was being sensible (Wells), i. e. was at that particular moment sensible. — While the number of tenses has increased, the number of moods has tended to diminish, the subjunctive having now very little vital power left. Most of its forms have become indistinguishable from those of the indicative, but the loss is not a serious one, for the thought is just as clearly expressed in 'if he died', where *died* may be either indicative or subjunctive, as in 'if he were dead,' where the verb has a distinctively subjunctive form.

218. It will be seen that the development of new tenses sketched in the preceding section greatly increased the number of sentences formed after the same pattern that we had already in the case of some small verbs, chief of which were *can, may, must.* First we have a small, in itself insignificant verb and afterwards the really important verb either in the infinitive (*can see, will see; could see,* etc.) or in some participle *(is seeing, has seen; was seeing, had seen)*. The number of sentences belonging to this type was enormously increased by the gradual development of the periphrastic *do.*[2] This verb was in OE. and early ME. used as a pro-verb to avoid the repetition of a verb just used, and as a causative, e. g. 'to do me live or deye' (Chaucer). In the latter sense it disappeared and was replaced by *make.* In ME.

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1 The alleged earlier examples are shown by Mossé, p 149, to be wrong.

2 The latest and fullest treatment is V. Engblom, *On the Origin and Early Development of the Auxiliary do* (Lund 1938), with bibliography and criticism of other writers

it came to be used more and more as an auxiliary and
may as such be placed by the side of the other lesser
verbs, as in 'Though this good man can not see it: other
men can see it, and haue sene it, and daily do see it'
(Sir T. More). At first it was used indiscriminately
without any definite grammatical purpose. In some
poets such as Lydgate, in the beginning of the fifteenth
century, it served chiefly to fill up the line and to make
it possible to place the infinitive at the end as a con-
venient rime-word. Sometimes it serves to make the
tense clear in those verbs that are alike in the present
and preterit: we do set, did set. Cf. also 'the holy spyryte
dyd and dothe remayne and shall remayne' (J. Fisher,
ab. 1535). The culmination was reached in the 16th cen-
tury, when it might almost seem as if all full verbs were
"stripped of all those elements which to most gram-
marians constitute the very essence of a verb, namely,
the marks of person, number, tense, and mood" (Pro-
gress in Lang. 124), leaving them to lesser verbs placed
before them.

219. But then a reaction set in and gradually restricted
the use of *do* to those cases that are well known from
grammars of Present English, and in which it serves a
definite grammatical purpose. It is used (1) for the sake
of emphasis, especially in contrast: 'Shelley, when he
did laugh, laughed heartily'; thus in earnest requests:
'Do tell me', even with *be:* 'Do be quiet!" (2) in negative
sentences with *not*. Here it ends a long development.
The earliest negative adverb is *ne*, placed before the
verb, OE. *ic ne secge*. But frequently this was streng-
thened by the addition of *noht* (from *nawiht, nowiht,*
meaning 'nothing') after the verb; *noht* became *not;*
and the typical ME. form thus was *I ne seye not.* Here
ne was pronounced with so little stress that it was apt
to be dropped altogether, and the fifteenth century form
was *I say not.* This survived for some centuries in *I know
not* and a few other now obsolete combinations, as well
as with all the formerly mentioned lesser verbs. By
means of *do* that word-order is obtained which in most

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languages is thought the most felicitous, *not* being placed before the really significant verb: *I do not say,* just as *I cannot say,* etc. In this position, however, *not* tends to be weakened, and so we get the colloquial forms *I don't say, can't say,* etc. (8) In such questions as are not introduced by a pronominal subject, which naturally has to stand first, the use of *do* as well as of the other lesser verbs effects a compromise between the ordinary interrogative word-order (verb before the subject) and the universal tendency to have the subject before the verb (that is, the verb that really means something): *Did he come?* just as *Must he come?*

220. Now the curious thing is that a similar construction of sentences is often made possible by means of the verbal substantives mentioned in 171. These are placed after verbs of small intrinsic meaning, to which are attached the marks of person and tense, of negation and question, in such familiar phrases as have a look (peep) at, have a wash, a shave, a try, have a care, take care, take a drive, a walk, a rest; give a glance, look, kick, push, hint; make (pay) a call, make a plunge, make use of, he made his bow to the hostess, etc.

221 (VIII). There are some important innovations in the syntax of the *infinitive.* In such a sentence as 'it is good for a man not to touch a woman', the noun with *for* was originally in the closest connexion with the adjective: 'What is good for a man?' 'Not to touch a woman.' But by a natural shifting this came to be apprehended as 'it is good | for a man not to touch a woman', so that *for a man* was felt to be the subject of the infinitive, and this manner of indicating the subject gradually came to be employed where the original construction is excluded. Thus in the beginning of a sentence: 'For us to levy power Proportionate to th'enemy, is all impossible' (Shakespeare), and after *than:* 'I don't know, what is worse than for such wicked strumpets to lay their sins at honest men's doors' (Fielding); further 'What I like best, is for a nobleman to marry a miller's daughter. And what

I like next best, is for a poor fellow to run away with a
rich girl' (Thackeray), 'it is of great use to healthy
women for them to cycle'.[1] Another recent innovation
is the use of *to* as what might be called a pro-infinitive
instead of the clumsy *to do so:* 'Will you play?' 'Yes,
I intend to.' 'I am going to.' This is one among sev-
eral indications that the linguistic instinct now takes
to to belong to the preceding verb rather than to the
infinitive, a fact which, together with other circum-
stances, serves to explain the phenomenon usually
mistermed 'the split infinitive'. This name is bad be-
cause we have many infinitives without *to*, as 'I made
him go'. *To* therefore is no more an essential part of
an infinitive than the definite article is an essential
part of a nominative, and no one would think of call-
ing 'the good man' a split nominative. Although
examples of an adverb between *to* and the infinitive
occur as early as the fourteenth century, they do not
become very frequent till the latter half of the nine-
teenth century. In some cases they decidedly contrib-
ute to the clearness of the sentence by showing at
once what word is qualified by the adverb. Thacke-
ray's and Seeley's sentences 'she only wanted a pipe
in her mouth *considerably* to resemble the late Field
Marshal' and 'the poverty of the nation did not allow
them *successfully* to compete with the other nations'
are not very happily built up, for the reader at the
first glance is inclined to connect the adverb with what
precedes. The sentences would have been clearer if
the authors had ventured to place *to* before the ad-
verb, as Burns does in 'Who dar'd to nobly stem
tyrannic pride', and Carlyle in 'new Emissaries are
trained, with new tactics, to, if possible, entrap him,
and hoodwink and handcuff him'.

222. This rapid sketch of a certain number of gram-
matical changes, though necessarily giving only a frac-
tion of the material on which it is based, has yet, I hope,

1 See my article in *Festschrift Viëtor* (Marburg 1910), p 85ff.
and *Philos. of Grammar* 118, where a Slavic parallel is mentioned.

been sufficiently full to show that such changes are
continually going on and that it would be a gross error
to suppose that any deviation from the established
rules of grammar is necessarily a corruption. Those
teachers who know least of the age, origin, and devel-
opment of the rules they follow, are generally the
most apt to think that whatsoever is more than these
cometh of evil, while he who has patiently studied the
history of the past and trained himself to hear the lin-
guistic grass grow in the present age will generally be
more inclined to see in the processes of human speech
a wise natural selection, through which while nearly
all innovations of questionable value disappear pretty
soon, the fittest survive and make human speech ever
more varied and flexible and yet ever more easy and
convenient to the speakers. There is no reason to
suppose that this development has come to a stop with
the beginning of the twentieth century: let us hope
that in the future the more and more almighty school-
master may not nip too many beneficial changes in
the bud.

middle ages of using a 'long ı' (that ıs, ȷ or I), whenever
the letter was ısolated or formed the last letter of a
group; the numeral 'one' was wrıtten ȷ or I (and three,
ııj, etc.) ȷust as much as the pronoun. Thus no socıo-
logical inference can be drawn from thıs peculıarıty.

248. On the other hand, the habıt of addressing a
single person by means of a plural pronoun was decıd-
edly ın ıts orıgın an outcome of an arıstocratic ten-
dency towards class-distınctıon. The habit originated
with the Roman Emperors, who desıred to be addressed
as beıngs worth more than a sıngle ordınary man; and
French courtesy ın the mıddle ages propagated it
throughout Europe. In England as elsewhere thıs
plural pronoun *(you, ye)* was long confined to respect-
ful address. Superıor persons or strangers were addressed
as *you; thou* thus becomıng the mark either of the
inferiority of the person spoken to, or of familiarity or
even intımacy or affectıon between the two inter-
locutors. Englısh ıs the only language that has got
rid of thıs useless distınctıon. The Quakers (the Society
of Frıends) obȷected to the habıt as obscurıng the
equality of all human beıngs; they therefore *thou*'d
(or rather *thee*'d) everybody But the same demo-
cratıc levellıng that they wanted to effect ın this way,
was achıeved a century and a half later ın socıety at
large, though ın a roundabout manner, when the
pronoun *you* was gradually extended to lower classes
and thus lost more and more of ıts previous character
of deference *Thou* then for some tıme was reserved
for relıgıous and lıterary use as well as for foul abuse,
until finally the latter use was discontinued also and
you became the only form used in ordınary conver-
satıon.

249. Apart from the not very sıgnificant survival
of *thou,* English has thus attaıned the only manner of
address worthy of a nation that respects the clementary
rights of each indıvıdual. People who express regret at
not having a pronoun of endearment and who insist
how pretty it ıs in other languages when, for instance,

two lovers pass from *vous* to the more familiar *tu*, should consider that no foreign language has really a pronoun exclusively for the most intimate relations. Where the two forms of address do survive, *thou* is very often, most often perhaps, used without real affection, nay very frequently in contempt or frank abuse. Besides, it is often painful to have to choose between the two forms, as people may be offended, sometimes by the too familiar, and sometimes by the too distant mode. Some of the unpleasant feeling of Helmer towards Krogstad in Ibsen's *Dukkehjem* ('A Doll's House' or 'Nora') must be lost to an English audience because occasioned by the latter using an old schoolfellow's privilege of *thou*-ing Helmer. In some languages the pronoun of respect often is a cause of ambiguity, in German and Danish by the identity in form of *Sie (De)* with the plural of the third person, in Italian and Portuguese by the identity with the singular (feminine) of the third person. When all the artificialities of the modes of address in different nations are taken into account — the *Lei, Ella, voi* and *tu* of the Italians, the *vossa mercê* ('your grace', to shopkeepers) and *você* (shortened form of the same, to people of a lower grade) of the Portuguese (who in addressing equals or superiors use the third person singular of the verb without any pronoun or noun), the *gij, jij, je* and *U* of the Dutch, not to mention the eternal use of titles as pronouns in German and, still more, in Swedish ('What does Mr. Doctor want?' 'The gracious Miss is probably aware', etc.) — the English may be justly proud of having avoided all such mannerisms and ridiculous extravagances, though the simple Old English way of using *thou* in addressing one person and *ye* in addressing more than one would have been still better.

250. Religion has had no small influence on the English language. The Bible has been studied and quoted in England more than in any other Christian country and a great many Biblical phrases have passed

into the ordinary language as household words. The
style of the Authorized Version has been greatly
admired by many of the best judges of English style,
who — with some exaggeration — recommend an early
familiarity with and a constant study of the English
bible (and of that great imitator of Biblical simplicity
and earnestness, John Bunyan) as the best training in
the English language.[1] Tennyson found that parts of
The Book of the Revelation were finer in English than
in Greek, and he said that 'the Bible ought to be read,
were it only for the sake of the grand English in which
it is written, an education in itself.'[2] The rhythmical
character of the Authorized Version is seen, for in-
stance, in the well-known passage (Job III. 17) 'There
the wicked cease from troubling: and there the wearie
be at rest', which Tennyson was able to use as the last
line of his 'May Queen' with scarcely any alteration:
'And the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary
are at rest'.

251. C. Stoffel has collected quite a number of
scriptural phrases and allusions used in Modern Eng-
lish[3], such as 'Tell it not in Gath', 'the powers that be',
'olive branches' (children), 'strain at (*or* out) a gnat',
'to spoil the Egyptians', 'he may run that readeth

1 See the long series of quotations given in Albert S Cook's
little book 'The Bible and English Prose Style' (Boston, 1892).
On the other hand, Fitzedward Hall says, 'To Dr. Newman, and
to the myriads who think as he does about our English Bible,
one would be allowed to whisper, that the poor 'Turks' of the
Prayer Book talk exactly in their own fashion, and for reasons
strictly analogous to theirs, about the purity of diction, and what
not, of 'the Blessed Koran' .   Ever since the Reformation, the
ruling language of English religion has been, with rare exception,
an affair either of studied antiquarianism or of nauseous pedantry.
Simplicity, and little more, was aimed at, originally, and it sufficed
for times of real earnestness. But the very quaintness of phrase
which King James countersigned has attained to be canonized,
till a *hath*, or a *thou*, delivered with conventional unction, now well
nigh inspires a sensation of solemnity in its hearer, and a persuasion
of the sanctanimity of its utterer'. (*Modern English* p 16—17.)

2 *Life and Letters*, II. 41 and 71.

3 *Studies in English, Written and Spoken*, 1894, p. 125.

it', 'take up his parable', 'wash one's hands of' some-
thing, 'a still small voice', 'thy speech bewrayeth thee'.
Some which Stoffel does not mention may find their
place here. The modern word a *helpmate* is a corrup-
tion of the two words in Gen. II. 18: 'I will make him
an *helpe meet* for him' (*meet* 'suitable'); the slang word
a *rib* 'a wife' is from Genesis, too, and so is the ex-
pression 'the lesser lights'. 'A howling wilderness' is
from Deuteron. XXXII. 10. 'My heart was still hot
within me; then spake I with my tongue' (used, for
instance, in Charlotte Bronte's 'The Professor', p. 161)
is from Psalms XXXIX. 3, and 'many inventions'
from Ecclesiastes VII. 29. From the New Testament
may be mentioned 'to kill the fatted calf'[1], 'whited
sepulchres', 'of the earth, earthy', and 'to comprehend
with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and
depth and height'. But people now begin to complain
that scriptural allusions are to a great extent lost to
the younger generation.

252. The scriptural 'holy of holies', which contains
a Hebrew manner of expressing the superlative[2], has
given rise to a great many similar phrases in English,
such as 'in my heart of hearts' (Shakesp. Hamlet,
III. 2. 78; Wordsw. Prelude XIV. 281), 'the place of
all places' (Miss Austen, Mansf. P. 71), 'I remember
you a buck of bucks' (Thackeray, Newc. 100), 'every
lad has a friend of friends, a crony of cronies, whom
he cherishes in his heart of hearts' (ib. 148), 'the evil
of evils in our present politics' (Lecky, Democr. and
Lib. I. 21), 'the woman is a horror of horrors' (H.
James, Two Magics 60), 'that mystery of mysteries, the
beginning of things' (Sully, Study of Childh. 71), 'she
is a modern of the moderns' (Mrs. H. Ward, Eleanor
265), 'love like yours is the pearl of pearls, and he who
wins it is prince of princes' (Hall Caine, Christian 443),
'chemistry had been the study of studies for T. Sandys'

1 While the phrase *prodigal son* is not found in the text of the
Bible, it occurs in the heading of the chapter (Luke XV).
2 Cf. 1 Timothy VI. 15 'the King of kings, and Lord of lords'.

(Barrie, Tommy and Grizel 6). Compare also 'I am sorrowful to my tail's tail' (Kipling, Sec. Jungle B. 160).

253. Some scriptural proper names have often been used as appellatives, such as *Jezebel* and *Rahab;* when a driver is called a *jehu* in slang, the allusion is to 2 Kings IX. 20, where Jehu's furious driving is mentioned. There is an American slang expression 'to give a person *jessie*' meaning, 'to beat him soundly', which is not explained in the Dictionaries (quotations may be found in Bartlett and in Farmer and Henley) Is it not in allusion to the *rod* mentioned in Isa. II. 1 ? ('There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse.') The NED. has the spelling *jesse* with the meaning 'a genealogical tree representing the genealogy of Christ ... a decoration for a wall, window, vestment, etc., or in the form of a large branched candlestick'.

254. The influence of Puritans, though not strong enough to proscribe such words as *Christmas,* for which they wanted to substitute *Christtide* in order to avoid the Catholic *mass,* was yet strong enough to modify the custom of swearing. In Catholic times all sorts of fantastic oaths were fashionable:

> Hir othes been so grete and so dampnable,
> That it is grisly for to here hem swere;
> Our blissed lordes body they to-tere;
> Hem thoughte Jewes rente him noght ynough.[1]

This practice was continued after the Reformation, and all sorts of alterations were made in the name of *God* in order to soften down the oaths: *gog, cocke, gosse, gosh, gom, Gough, Gad* etc. Similarly instead of (the) *Lord* people would say something like *Law, Lawks, Losh,* etc. Sometimes only the first sound was left out (Odd's lifelings, Shakesp. Tw. V. 187), more often only the genitive ending survived: 'Sblood (God's

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[1] Chaucer C. T., C. 472 ff., also see Skeat's note to this passage, Chaucer's Works V p. 275.

blood), 'snails, 'slight, 'slid, 'zounds (God's wounds).
The final sound of the nominative is kept in *'drot it*
(God rot it), which was later made *drat it* (or with a
playful corruption *rabbit it*). Many of these disguised
oaths were extremely popular, and some survive to
this day. *Goodness gracious me,* which defies all gram-
matical analysis, is one among numerous compromises
between the inclination to swear and the fear of
swearing; note also Rosalind's words: 'By my troth,
and in good earnest, and so God mend mee, and by all
pretty oathes that are not dangerous'. (As IV. 1. 192.)

255. The Puritans caused a law to be enacted in 1606
by which profane language was prohibited on the stage
(3 James I. chap. 21), and consequently words like
'zounds were changed or omitted in Shakespearian
plays, as we see from a comparison of the folio of 1623
and the earlier quartos; *Heaven* or *Jove* was substituted
for *God,* and *'fore me (afore me)* or *trust me* for *(a)fore
God;* 'God give thee the spirit of persuasion' (H 4
A I. 2. 170) was changed into 'Maist thou have the spirit
of perswasion', etc. But in ordinary life people went
on swearing, and from the comedies of the Restoration
period a rich harvest may be reaped of all sorts of
curious oaths. By little and little, however, the Puritan
spirit conquered, and the English came to swear less
than other European nations. Even the usual terms for
oaths, — 'profane language' and 'expletives' — point to
a greater purity in this respect. Instead of *My God,* an
Englishwoman will often say *Dear me!* or *Oh my!* or *Good
gracious!* Note also euphemisms like 'deuce' for devil
and 'the other place' or 'a very uncomfortable place'
for hell.[1] Among words that used to be tabooed in Eng-
land one finds a great number which in other countries
would be considered quite innocent, and the English
have shown a really astonishing inventiveness in 'apolo-
gies' for strong words of every kind. *Damn* was considered
extremely objectionable, and even such a mild sub-
stitute for it as *confound* was scarcely allowed in polite

[1] Compare also 'I will see you *further*'.

society.[1] In Bernard Shaw's *Candida* Morell is provoked into exclaiming 'Confound your impudence!', whereupon his vulgar father-in-law retorts, 'Is that becomin language for a clorgyman?' and Morell replies, 'No, sir, it is not becoming language for a clergyman. I should have said damn your impudence: thats what St. Paul or any honest priest would have said to you'. Other substitutes for *damned* are *hanged*, *somethinged* (much rarer)[2] and a few that originate in the manner in which the objectionable word is — *not* printed: *dashed* (a — or 'dash' being put instead of it). *blanked* or *blanky* (from the same manner), *deed* (from the abbreviation d — d; sometimes the verb is printed *to D*). *Darned* is perhaps nothing but a purely phonetical development of *damned*, which is not without analogies, while *danged*, which occurs in Tennyson, is a curious blending of *damned* and *hanged*.[3] Thus we have here a whole family of words with an initial *d*, allowing the speaker to begin as if he were going to say the prohibited word, and then to turn off into more innocent channels.[4] The same is the case with the *bl*-words. *Blessed* by a process which is found in other similar cases[5] came to mean the opposite of the original meaning and became a synonym of cursed; *blamed* had the same signification.[6] Instead of these strong expressions people began to use other adjectives, shunting off after pronouncing *bl*- into some innocent word

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1 In the original sense it has often to be accompanied by *together* to avoid misunderstanding.

2 Cf. the similar use of *something* in 'Where the something are you coming to?' (Pett Ridge, Lost Property 167.)

3 'I'm doomed!' Corp muttered to himself, pronouncing it in another way. (Barrie, Tommy and Grizel, p. 122.) This shows another way of disguising the word *in print*.

4 Cp. also the expression· "Kingsley's struggles with the fourth letter of the alphabet" (a little swearing was thought no blemish in your muscular Christian) *Life of Leslie Stephen* 138.

5 Cf. *silly*, French *benêt*, etc.

6 There exists also a word *blarned*, a blending of *blamed* and *damned* (darned). Cp. also *I swan, I swow* and other similar ways of not saying *I swear*.

like *bloody*, which soon became a great favourite with
the vulgar and therefore a horror to ears polite, or
blooming, which had the same unhappy fate in the
latter half of the nineteenth century. Few authors
would now venture to term their heroines 'blooming
young girls' as George Eliot does repeatedly in 'Middle-
march'. Similarly Shakespeare's expression 'the bloody
book of law' is completely spoilt to modern readers,
and lexicographers now have to render Old English
blodig and the corresponding words in foreign languages
by 'bleeding', 'blood-stained', 'sanguinary' or 'ensan-
guined'; but even *sanguinary* is often made a sub-
stitute for 'bloody' in reporting vulgar speech.

256. This is the usual destiny of euphemisms; in
order to avoid the real name of what is thought in-
decent or improper people use some innocent word.
But when that becomes habitual in this sense it
becomes just as objectionable as the word it has
ousted and now is rejected in its turn. *Privy* is the
regular English development of French *privé;* but when
it came to be used as a noun for 'a privy place' and in
the phrase 'the privy parts', it had to be supplanted
in the original sense by *private*, except in 'Privy
Council', 'Privy Seal' and 'Privy Purse', where its
official dignity kept it alive. The plural *parts* was an
ordinary expression for 'talents, mental ability', until
the use of the word in veiled language made it im-
possible.[1]

257. The twentieth century, and especially the time
after the Great War, has put a stop to many of the
linguistic prohibitions that flourished in the Victorian
era. People are not now so afraid of saying *damn* and
bloody as their ancestors were, and many sexual things
are now spoken of quite openly. The present generation
shake their heads at the prudery of Boston ladies who
would speak of the *limbs* of a piano or their own *benders*

1 Cf. from America 'He-biddy. — A male fowl. A product of
prudery and squeamishness'. Farmer, *Americanisms* p. 298. Cf.
also Storm, *Engl. Philologie*, p. 887 (roosterswain).

instead of *legs*.[1] Many absurd names (inexpressibles, in-explicables, indescribables, unmentionables, unwhisper-ables, my mustn't mention-'em, etc.) were used to avoid the simple word *trousers*, at which no one takes offence nowadays. According to F. T. Elworthy[2] even Somerset peasants thought such names as *bull, stallion, boar, cock, ram* indelicate. All this now belongs to ancient history.

258. This volume has in so far been one-sided as it has dealt chiefly with Standard English and has left out of account nearly everything that is not generally accepted as such, apart from here and there a nonce-formation or a bold expression which is not recognized as good English though interesting as showing the possibilities of the language and perhaps in some cases deserving popularity just as well as many things that nobody finds fault with. I have had no space in this little volume for the question how one form of English came to be taken as standard in preference to dialects[3], nor for chapters on provincialisms, cockneyisms and vulgarisms, on American and Colonial English, on slang[4] and cant[5], on Pidgin-English and other exotic forms of English[6], etc. I have also deliberately omitted all the problems connected with that pseudo-historical and anti-educational abomination, the English spel-ling.[7] At present I shall conclude with a few remarks on what might be called the Expansion of English.

1 Cf Opie Read, *A Kentucky Colonel*, p. 11 'He was so delicate of expression that he always said limb when he meant leg'.

2 *Transactions of the Philological Society*, 1898.

3 See now "Mankind, Nation, and Individual" (Oslo 1925) ch. III and IV, where the development of common languages in general is discussed.

4 Ibid. ch. VIII.

5 Ibid. ch. X.

6 Cf. *Language* ch. XII on Beach-la-Mar and Pidgin.

7 An historical account of the English sound-system and English spelling may be found in my *Modern English Grammar* I (Heidel-berg, Carl Winter, 1909). A later, but unfortunately only half-finished treatment is Karl Luick, *Historische Grammatik der englischen Sprache* (Leipzig 1914—1929).

259. Only two or three centuries ago, English was spoken by so few people that no one could dream of its ever becoming a world language. In 1582 Richard Mulcaster wrote, 'The English tongue is of small reach, stretching no further than this island of ours, nay not there over all'. 'In one of Florio's Anglo-Italian dialogues, an Italian in England, asked to give his opinion of the language, replied it was worthless beyond Dover. Ancillon regretted that the English authors chose to write in English as no one abroad could read them Even such as learned English by necessity speedily forgot it. As late as 1718, Le Clerc deplored the small number of scholars on the Continent able to read English'.[1] Compare what Portia replies to Nerissa's question about Fauconbridge, the young baron of England (Merch. I. 2. 72): 'You know I say nothing to him, for hee understands not me, nor I him: he hath neither Latine, French, nor Italian, and you will come into the Court and sweare that I have a poore pennie-worth in the English. Hee is a proper mans picture. but alas, who can converse with a dumbe show?' In 1714 Veneroni published an Imperial Dictionary of the four chief languages of Europe, that is, Italian, French, German and Latin.[2] Nowadays, no one would overlook English in making even the shortest possible list of the chief languages, because in political, social, and literary importance it is second to none and because it is the mother-tongue of a greater number of human beings than any of its competitors

260. It would be unreasonable to suppose, as is sometimes done, that the cause of the enormous propagation of the English language is to be sought in its intrinsic merits When two languages compete, the

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1 Ch Bastide, *Huguenot Thought in England.* Journal of Comparative Literature I (1903) p. 45

2 Das kayserliche Spruch- und Wörterbuch, darinnen die 4 europäischen Hauptsprachen, als nemlich: das Italiänische, das Frantzösische, das Teutsche und das Lateinische erklärt werden.

victory does not fall to the most perfect language as such. Nor is it *always* the nation whose culture is superior that makes the nation of inferior culture adopt its language. It sometimes happens in a district of mixed nationalities that the population which is intellectually superior give up their own language because they can learn their neighbours' tongue while these are too dull to learn anything but their own. Thus a great many social problems are involved in the general question of rivalry of languages, and it would be an interesting, but difficult task to examine in detail all the different reasons that have in so many regions of the world determined the victory of English over other languages, European and non-European. Political ascendancy would probably be found in most cases to have been the most powerful influence.

261. However that may be, the fact remains that no other European language has spread over such vast regions during the last few centuries, as shown by the following figures, which represent the number of millions of people speaking each of the languages enumerated[1]:

Year	English	German	Russian	French	Spanish	Italian
1500	4(5)	10	3	10(12)	$8^1/_2$	$9^1/_2$
1600	6	10	3	14	$8^1/_2$	$9^1/_2$
1700	$8^1/_2$	10	3(15)	20	$8^1/_2$	$9^1/_2$(11)
1800	20(40)	30(33)	25(31)	27(31)	26	14(15)
1900	116(123)	75(80)	70(85)	45(52)	44(58)	34(54)
1926	170	80	80	45	65	41

The latest figures that have come to hand, are those in H. L Mencken, *The American Language*, 4th ed., 1936, p. 592: 'First, let us list those to whom English is their native tongue. They run to about 112,000,000

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1 The numbers given are necessarily approximative only, especially for the older periods Where my authorities disagree, I have given the lowest and in parenthesis the highest figure. The figures for 1926 are from L. Tesnière's *Appendice* to A. Meillet's *Les Langues dans l'Europe Nouvelle* (Paris 1928).

in the continental United States, to 42,000,000 in the
United Kingdom, to 6,000,000 in Canada, 6,000,000 in
Australia, 3,000,000 in Ireland, 2,000,000 in South
Africa, and probably 3,000,000 in the remaining British
colonies and in the possessions of the United States. All
these figures are very conservative, but they foot up to
174,000,000. Now add the people who, though born to
some other language, live in English-speaking com-
munities and speak English themselves in their daily
business, and whose children are being brought up to
it — say 13,000,000 for the United States, 1,000,000 for
Canada, 1,000,000 for the United Kingdom and Ireland,
and 1,000,000 for the rest of the world — and you have
a grand total of 191,000,000 ' Mencken gives the figures
for Spanish as 100, for Russian as 80, and for German
as 85 millions, and adds· 'Thus English is far ahead of
any competitor. Moreover, it promises to increase its
lead hereafter, for no other language is spreading so
fast or into such remote areas... Altogether, it is
probable that English is now spoken as a second lan-
guage by at least 20,000,000 persons thoughout the
world — very often, to be sure, badly, but nevertheless
understandably'.

Whatever a remote future may have in store, one
need not be a great prophet to predict that in the near
future the number of English-speaking people will in-
crease considerably. It must be a source of gratifica-
tion to mankind that the tongue spoken by two of the
greatest powers of the world is so noble, so rich, so
pliant, so expressive, and so interesting as the language
whose growth and structure I have been here endeav-
ouring to characterize.

Phonetic Symbols.

'stands before the stressed syllable.
·indicates length of the preceding vowel.

[a·]	as in *alms*.		[ʌ]	as in *hut*.
[ai]	as in *ice*.		[u·]	as in French *épouse*.
[au]	as in *house*.		[uw]	as in *who*; practically
[æ]	as in *hat*.			= [u·].
[ei]	as in *hate*.		[y]	as in French *vu*.
[ə]	as in *about, colour*.		[þ]	as in *thin*.
[i·]	as in French *dise*.		[ð]	as in *this*.
[ij]	as in *heat*; practically		[s]	as in *seal*.
	= [i·].		[z]	as in *seal*.
[ou]	as in *so*.		[ʃ]	as in *skin*; [tʃ] as in *chin*.
[ɔ]	as in *hot*.		[ʒ]	as in *vision*; [dʒ] as in *gin*.
[ɔ·]	as in *hall*.			

See my *Modern English Grammar* 1 (1909).

Abbreviations.

OE. = Old English ('Anglo-Saxon').
ME. = Middle English.
ModE. = Modern English.
OFr. = Old French.
ON. = Old Norse.
OHG. = Old High German.
NED. = A New English Dictionary, by Murray, Bradley, Craigie, and Onions.

The titles of Shakespeare's plays are abbreviated as in Al. Schmidt's *Shakespeare-Lexikon*, thus Ado = *Much Ado about Nothing*, Gent. = *The two Gentlemen of Verona*, II4A = *First Part of Henry the Fourth*, Hml. = *Hamlet*, R 2 = *Richard the Second*, Tp. = *Tempest*, Tw. = *Twelfth Night*, Wiv. = *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, etc.
Acts, scenes, and lines as in the Globe edition.

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